

JOHN'S: THE MAVERICK CHRISTIAN GROUP THE EVIDENCE OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that John's was a maverick Christian group and that the nature and quality of this group can be seen in the nature and quality of the language used in the Gospel. By employing insights from speech accommodation theory, antilanguage perspectives, and the sociolinguistics of intimacy, one can establish the general lines of the Johannine association that might assist in a more adequate interpretation of this Gospel.

Beginners in Second Testament Greek often start with the document called the Gospel of John (= John). To many, John's language is distinctive if only because it is simpler than that of any other Second Testament writing. John has a rather straightforward vocabulary and syntax. But vocabulary and syntax are at the wording level of language (Halliday 1978). Language is a three-tiered affair both for the sociolinguist and for the ordinary person. People often speak of changing wording that is too harsh or too weak, yet imparting the same meaning. Such a perspective intimates that language consists of (1) soundings/spellings that (2) realize wordings that (3) realize meanings. The soundings and spellings are quite concrete; they are in fact the only dimension of language that affects the senses. The next level, wording, is about patterning soundings and spellings. Wording patterns range from textual forms, through sentence forms, to word forms. The third level, meaning, is the socially significant feature expressed and realized by means of wording, which is realized by means of sounding and spelling. Given the experience of human beings as essentially social beings, those meanings come from and in fact constitute the social system. This three-tiered model of language would have the Bible reader ask: What social system or social meaning is being expressed in the textual wordings realized in the spellings of biblical documents?

It seems easy to learn Greek wording by analyzing and memorizing the patterns that emerge in John's Gospel, since they are so few in number. But wording is not meaning. Rather, wording is the way humans realize and express meaning in language. The meanings themselves derive from some social system. Often beginning Greek students learn to express meanings from their own social system by means of the wording and spelling found in John's Gospel. In this sense, they learn to speak English in Greek. The question basic to a considerate interpretation, of course, is how to recover the social system of the author so as to understand

that author's meanings conveyed in the wording and spelling of the document.

On the other hand, at the wording level the document called John is a text, it is a meaningful configuration of language intended to communicate. We know it is intended to communicate—and not just a bunch of doodling—because people in our social system told us it is a gospel. This they learned from people before them, ranging back, presumably, to the first collectors of such works in the second century. People speak or produce documents such as gospels in order to have some social effect. In fact language is essentially a form of social interaction. People direct language at each other in order to mean in some social context.

Considering a Text

Now, who spoke John to whom for what purpose? Can social context be inferred from the language that people use? Not a few German biblical scholars early in this century did attempt to describe the social situation of early Christian groups on the basis of the wording level of language, that is the level of the patterns of writing and/or speaking, or "literary" forms found in the Second Testament. While these biblical scholars came up with some fine insights, most often their assessment of the social situations available to early Christian groups mirrored modern church situations and concerns (preaching, miracles, teaching, and the like). They were not much focused on situations and concerns of the first-century Mediterranean with its domestic and political religions.

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There was little to correct the trend on the part of linguistics, since during this period the study of language was innocent of social concerns.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the study of language focused on explaining why it was that persons could produce an endless stream of novel sentences, many of which had never been uttered by anyone else before, and yet were readily understood by others. The answer at that time was that there were a limited number of, albeit complex, grammatical rules from which an infinite number of sentences can be transformed [Giles & Wiemann: 351-52].

This, of course, is the "language without social context" approach, replicated in so much literary criticism. Without linguistics to break the approach, the many literary critics (structuralists, post-modernists, deconstructionists) claimed that the social system whose meanings were realized in the wording level of language, in "texts" as they like to designate these documents, is not knowable at all. All that one can know from a "text" is what one puts into it (see Malina 1995b, forthcoming). And of course this position plays right into the concerns of those practical hermeneuticists who have a whole close-of-the-twentieth-century agenda to put into the "texts" so they can "discover" it, such as feminists, liberationists, Christian zionists, and other contextualists.

Considering Communication

The fact is, all ancient "texts," that is, all ancient wordings, once did realize meanings from a social system. Now linguists tell us that what persons talk about is meaningful to their conversation partners, not so much because these partners do not know what a speaker (or writer) is going to say, but because the partners *do* know. Any listener or reader has abundant evidence of what some speaker or writer is going to say both from his/her knowledge of how the language works and from practiced sensibility to what one in fact can say in specific situations. Human beings tend to adapt their language to the language of those with whom they interact. As a rule, members of various social groups can predict the types of meanings that might be exchanged from the situation in which speaking takes place. The other side of the coin looks to the speaker (or writer). Considerate authors take their audience into account, just like considerate conversation partners. Authors develop their scenarios with a view to having an effect on their readers and/or listeners. There can be little doubt that the author of John, whoever he may have been, accommodated his language to his audience. This means that he did not invent or create his own distinctive language characteristics. John is not the "Maverick Gospel" (thus Kysar 1976; rev. ed. 1993) so much as John's audience was the "Maverick Christian Group."

As I hope to show rather abundantly, when a speaker or author views his or her conversation partners positively, language users inevitably make alterations in language so as to draw closer to the listener(s) or reader(s) and to draw the listener(s) or reader(s) closer to the language user as they communicate. Such drawing closer to one's audience is social convergence (On the other hand, with partners viewed negatively, the language user will utilize a range of language features to accentuate differences and thus keep the listener(s) or reader(s) at a distance as they communicate. Such drawing away from the audience is social divergence.)

The importance of giving attention to the way speakers and writers accommodate by focusing on convergence (and divergence) in language is further underscored by those who view this feature as essential to the activity of communication. Consider Rogers' definition of communication in the last edition of his work about the communication of innovation:

Communication is a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding. This definition implies that communication is a process of convergence (or divergence) as two or more individuals exchange information in order to move toward each other (or apart) in the meanings they ascribe to certain events [Rogers 1983: 5].

Obviously, if communication is a process of linguistic convergence (or divergence), the distinctive features of this process should be of interest to those concerned with biblical interpretation.

In this essay, I consider the Gospel of John as an instance of communication. I hope to show how one might come to know a group such as John's from the document that bears his name. Secondly, I wish to underscore some of the characteristic features of this group, again on the basis of John's communication. A theory that allows an investigator to envisage an audience from a piece of communication is called speech accommodation theory. And the path I will follow to highlight the characteristic features of John's group consists of two dimensions of sociolinguistics called antilanguage and the language of intimacy.

Speech Accommodation Theory

Speech accommodation theory is based on the previously noted fact that human beings tend to adapt their language to the language of those with whom they interact. The theory deals with those cognitive, motivational, and affective processes that underlie the way in which persons adapt to another's use of language or accentuate linguistic differences.

SAT [Speech Accommodation Theory], developed by Giles and associates, focuses on the social cognitive processes mediating individuals' perceptions of the environment and their communicative behaviors. Its theoretical framework developed out of a wish to demonstrate the value and potential of social psychological concepts and processes for understanding the dynamics of speech diversity in social settings. It purports to clarify the motivations underlying, as well as the constraints operating upon, speech shifts during social interactions and the social consequences of these. Specifically it originated in order to elucidate the cognitive and affective processes underlying speech convergence and divergence, although other speech strategies (for example, speech complementarity and speech competition) have come into its theoretical purview more recently [Giles *et al.*: 14].

The central notion of the speech accommodation theory framework is that as they speak or as they write, those who communicate are motivated to adjust or to accommodate their linguistic styles to their audience as a strategy for gaining various social goals. Given the fact that the author of John is a first-century Mediterranean, for example, we can be sure he communicated with his group to evoke their social approval as well as to maintain their positive assessment of his social identity. Furthermore, he certainly sought to be effective in his communicational endeavor and with the group to which he was so attached. After all, "love" is group attachment. It was John's perception of his audience's language style that determined his evaluation of what his own appropriate style should be for the telling of his story. People constantly judge and assess their interlocutors or audience. They wish to be accepted and understood by their audience, and they seek to come away from the interaction with a positive self-assessment. In Mediterranean terms, to even write a document like the Gospel of John is nothing less than to challenge the honor of one's fellows, as well as one's enemies (see Malina 1993: 28-60). Simply as an author (that is, apart from concerns for being considerate of the audience), the author of John sought to allay the challenge quality of his presentation and transformed it into a group product to be shared rather than a gift requiring reciprocity. I think anyone who understands Mediterranean society will admit this (unless s/he postulates that John was insane). He carried off this transformation by techniques of accommodation, notably linguistic convergence with a view to audience acceptance—thus maintaining his own sense of honor. He equally underscored features of interpersonal intimacy—thus totally defusing any challenge quality in the work.

Linguistic Convergence

Adaptation to another's use of language is called linguistic convergence (while the accentuation of differences is called linguistic divergence). People who intend to com-

municate converge to where they believe their partners are linguistically located for both intellectual reasons (to make sense and have effect) and affective reasons (to demonstrate solidarity, loyalty, commitment). Language convergence is often cognitively mediated by stereotypes of one's language partners. For in their desire to be considerate, speakers and writers have to work from socially categorized images of how others will use language (children, retarded, elderly, blind, foreigners). People learn how to converge with their interlocutors in the process of enculturation.

In John's case, the author adequately revealed who he thought his audience was and what sort of language they would understand. For it surely makes sense for us to believe John's original audience could follow the author in his assessment of the personages and interactions depicted in the Gospel's various stories. And we can be sure this audience also shared his stereotypes of the Gospel's range of characters and their reaction to what Jesus said and did. The Gospel offers a fine sampling of various persons converging and diverging with Jesus' statements. As I will later demonstrate, however, it was not so much by general enculturation in the prevailing social system that John's audience could follow him. Rather it was by resocialization in the Johannine group that they acquired the ability needed to follow John's Gospel. Convergence thus reflects an author's desire for social integration or identification with the group. The Gospel of John provided members of the Johannine group with a verbal repertoire and verbal flexibility to modify and maintain their own language patterns so that they might better fit into the group.

Trudgill suggests that lexical shifts probably precede grammatical and phonological convergence and that the latter also may be inhibited by difficulties in restructuring as well as by a desire to avoid loss of contrast and strongly stereotyped features. Thus different speakers may adopt different convergent strategies as well as having different purposes for so doing [Giles *et al.*: 21].

John's vocabulary would mirror the lexical selections in vogue among his associates. The distinctiveness of this vocabulary would indicate that other Christian associations did not converge in this regard. As a matter of fact, given what the author of 1 John writes, it would seem that that document emerged as a sort of linguistic broker. 1 John was written to compensate for the apparent lack of understanding of what John was about and to promote solidarity and empathy. 1 John was written to bridge the communicational gaps between that document's audience and John's Gospel, so as not to detract from optimal outcomes sought by the Gospel.

Convergence has been defined as a linguistic strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's language by

means of a wide range of linguistic features, including language rates, pauses, and utterance length, pronunciations and so on. Divergence refers to the way in which speakers accentuate vocal differences between themselves and others. Both of these linguistic shifts may be either upward or downward, where the former refers to a shift in a societally valued direction and the latter refers to modifications toward more stigmatized forms [Giles *et al.*: 14].

Considerate speakers and authors are masters of language accommodation. They know how to converge with their audience (see Malina 1991). Given the preponderant interpersonal focus of John, the author of this document was undoubtedly a considerate author, that is, one who was person-centered, receiver-focused, rhetorically sensitive. In the hands (or mouth) of a considerate author, language convergence is an active communicative strategy. Convergence facilitates interaction-maintenance and goals. Now, whether consciously or automatically and unawares, John applied a convergence script (or schema or scenario) to move toward the language he shared with his fellow group members.

Linguistic Divergence

Language divergence is a symbolic tactic for maintaining intergroup distinctiveness. While language convergence eases intergroup boundaries, divergence underscores intergroup markers and division. Simply put, whoever did not speak "Johannine" was not a member of John's group. If John's language and style were so distinctive, that is because John's group was quite distinctive, hence set apart and divided from all other contemporary groups: Christian, Israelite, and Hellenistic. Thus language divergence and convergence are "a more subtle measure in studies of in-group *outs*" (Messick & Mackie). People use language styles as a symbolic tactic for maintaining identity, ideological focus, cultural pride, and distinctiveness.

This tactic, so evident in John once one reads the prologues, marks a refusal to converge. Divergence is disaccommodation. Disaccommodation accentuates the linguistic and social differences between ingroup and outgroup. Such accentuation maintains social integrity, distance, and identity.

It is likely that there is a hierarchy of strategies for psycholinguistic distinctiveness varying in the degree of social dissociation that they indicate. The range runs from a few pronunciations and content differentiations through forms of accent and dialect divergences to verbal abuse and naming, abrasive humor, and the maintenance or switch to another language in response to an outgroup speaker [Giles *et al.*: 30].

Everything depends on the repertoire of wording potential (language patterns, syntax, vocabulary) available to the speaker/writer and audience.

Divergence not only expresses attitudes, but also puts order and meaning into the interaction and provides a mutually understood basis for communication. Content and discourse differentiation in John and other forms of divergence serve to indicate that the speaker is not a member of the larger community or of other Christian groups, much less a member in good standing of "this world" or of "the Judeans." This is a socially self-handicapping tactic. For when the denizens of this world or of Judea or even of other Christian groups assessed John's linguistic divergence as purposeful, their accusations of dissidence and deviance could not be far behind. Divergence acts as a form of self-disclosure to indicate that certain norms and spheres of knowledge and behavior are not shared with the outgroup and that ingroup interactions are at a premium.

The Foundations of Speech Accommodation

Giles and his associates believe that a study of accommodation phenomena is worthwhile if only because such phenomena pervade human interaction. Speech accommodation is really *communication* accommodation (Giles *et al.*: 41). And communication accommodation is rooted in the following social psychological principles: similarity of attraction, causal attribution, and intergroup processes. Consider each of these principles in turn.

Similarity of Attraction

As one person becomes more similar to another, the greater the likelihood that the second will like the first. Interpersonal convergence through language is a strategy to this end. The principle of the similarity of attraction evidences the fact that the author of John set forth the story of Jesus as he did because the people for whom he wrote shared similar modes of perception, evaluation, and articulation. In sum, they "believed" as he did; hence he writes that they "may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God" (John 20:31).

People converge in language because of their desire for social integration or social identification with others. The greater the speaker's or writer's need to gain another's approval or attraction, the greater the degree of convergence there will be, up to a certain optimal point. Interactants of this sort converge both to where they believe others are or even where they expect them to be as they carefully lead them along. Increasing similarity in communication increases a person's attractiveness, predictability, intelligibility, and interpersonal involvements (empiric proof cited by Giles *et al.*: 17). Apart from the general feature that people are essentially social beings, people seek social approval for

the following reasons: they will probably interact in the future, they wish to have social effect on one another, they can empathize, they previously benefited from convergence, interaction fills their individual need for approval. Presumably all these features applied to the author of John as member of the group that shared John's Gospel. People tend to converge in the direction of those wielding symbols of social effectiveness. In other words, speakers converge up to those perceived to wield power, wealth, influence or loyalty and solidarity. In our society, for example, salesmen converge in the direction of their customers, parish members to clergy, soldiers to their officers, and the like (Giles *et al.*: 17, 22-23). Such convergence in the direction of others may mark divergence from group of origin. Thus a Christian coming from a Pauline or Petrine group would converge in speech usage in the direction of the Johannine one. Or such convergence in speech may simply reflect a person's actual social location as a member of John's group.

Causal Attribution

A second reason for communication accommodation is rooted in the fact that people attempt to understand and evaluate the behavior of others in terms of the motives and intentions they attribute as being the cause of the behavior. People behave as they do because they are motivated to behave that way. When people observe behavior of significance to them, they inevitably attribute motives to explain the behavior. A motive is a person's capacity to find satisfaction in a given state of affairs and a disposition to seek that satisfaction. Motives may be self-oriented or other-oriented, group-oriented or societally-oriented (Zander 1971; 1985). In such causal attribution, three factors are involved: the ability of the other person, the effort expended by the other person, and the external pressures impelling the person to act in a particular way.

In his assessment of his audience's motives, John would take into account the ability and effort of his audience members as well as the social pressures that propel their actions. They joined the Johannine group to find satisfaction; they were presumably well disposed to seek satisfaction in that group (on John's group as individualistic, see Malina 1986a: 55-61 and *passim*). Causal attribution would focus our attention on how and in what the Johannine group sought and found satisfaction. Presumably this satisfaction consisted in their effectively becoming "children of God" (John 1:12), in experiencing the Spirit (John 19:30) that enabled them to understand the real meaning of what Jesus said and did (John 7:39; 14:26; 16:12-13), and in performing those even greater works (John 14:12) that Jesus promised to those who believe in him as God's revelatory agent. In sum, members of John's community saw, that is experienced, God (14:9).

On the other hand, throughout the story we have the opportunity to observe how John attributes motives to Jesus' opponents. The global opposition of "this world" and "the Judeans," and the specific opposition of single groups such as the Pharisees and the crowds facilitate John's divergence strategies. John's description of persons reacting to Jesus most often presents them as representatives of different social groups even though they have individual names. Thus encounters with Jesus fall along an interindividual-intergroup continuum. At the interindividual end, interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics are highlighted in the encounter, often a conversation. But as the encounter develops beyond the conversation stage, Jesus addresses the intergroup dimension. Then members of the outgroup are treated as undifferentiated items in a unified social category ("this world," "the Judeans"). But ingroup members take on the characteristics of their own group ("you") in a self-stereotyping way (after Tajfel & Turner 1979, cited by Giles *et al.*: 29). These features with their underlying causal attributions are quite apparent in the many conversations in John, where dialogue turns into monologue (John 3:1-4:42; 5:10ff; 6:22ff; 9:13-10:42; 11:1-44; 11:45-12:36a).

Institutional Norms for Speech Accommodation

Obviously the quality and content of linguistic congruence and divergence depend to a large extent upon the institution in which communication takes place. "In the first-century Mediterranean, the overarching institutions were kinship and politics. Religion and economics were embedded in these with the following results as regards institutional arrangements. There were kinship with its domestic religion and domestic economics, and politics with its political religion and political economics (Malina 1986b; 1995c, forthcoming). What persons talk about is meaningful to their conversation partners because these partners know what a speaker or writer is going to say. John is writing for a fictive kin group consisting of fellow "disciples" (so unlike other Second Testament groups, which consist of fictive "brothers" and presumably "sisters"). First-century Mediterranean teachers and their disciples were devoted to a way of living, a style of experiencing life that embraces God and fellow humans (see Culpepper). Thus any listener aware of how a teacher and his disciples behaved in society would have abundant evidence of what John was going to say both from knowledge of how the language works in disciple-based fictive kin-groups and from practiced sensibility to what one in fact can say in generic and specific situations of this sort. Johannine disciples took on their roles and developed social identities in the group in terms of their understanding of the generic institution that disciple-based fictive kinship was. This social identity was formed in terms of a central process that includes social categorization (disciple of the teacher,

Jesus), identification (living out discipleship), social comparison (between ingroup and outgroup discipleship), and psychological distinctiveness (experiences as children of God). The sequence of stages in this process of social identity formation, then, are categorization, identification, comparison, and distinctiveness. This sequence replicates the stages entailed in the foundation of a group (aware, share, compare, declare) as follows. In group formation, some individual becomes *aware* of a problem requiring a group for its solution, then *shares* this awareness with others; others then *compare* the solution with those available in the society and finally accept or reject it and *let others know* about it as well (see Malina 1995b, forthcoming).

With a new social identity, as member of a new and significant group, a person's language usage changes accordingly.

When one of an individual's social group memberships is construed as situationally salient, he or she will attempt to differentiate from relevant outgroup individuals on dimensions that are valued as core aspects of their group identity. Should language be a salient dimension of that group membership, as it so often is for ethnic groups, then differentiation by means of language or nonverbal divergence will ensue (on one or more of the following dimensions: language, dialect, slang, phonology, discourse structures, isolated words and phrases, posture, and so on) in order to achieve a positive psycholinguistic distinctiveness [Giles et al.: 29, citing Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor 1977].

Often the valued feature of a language interaction is the event at which language takes place along with the institutional expectations the event signals. Consider, for example, the response to a question posed by a hostile questioner (John 7:14-24), the conversation struck up with some unknown person (John 5:2-9), the riposte to a challenge to one's honor (John 8:48-59), or the challenge directed to an unknown opponent (John 6:47-51). Language behavior at such events follows sociolinguistic norms for dealing with outgroup persons. Convergence here means adherence to strong social norms for dealing with outsiders, not adherence to the language-style of the others as though they were fellow ingroup members.

The fact is that in language interactions, people are constrained by social norms. The distinctiveness of John on the wording level alone clearly indicates how constrained he was by his group's norms and his unconcern with the social norms prevailing in the outgroup. Again, the language of John is that of the Johannine group, the "maverick Christian association." Since the right choice of language led to rewards such as increased perceived attractiveness, gains in listener's approval, cooperativeness, and compliance, we can assume that John's right choices yielded social effectiveness. On the other hand, the costs involved in his choice

involved outgroup evaluations of a negative sort: decrease in perceived competence, expended effort, the possible loss of personal or social identity, and sanctions accruing from antinormative or nonnormative communication. A number of these negative outcomes are alluded to in the story, as forecast by Jesus (John 15:20; 16:2).

Interactant Dimensions of Accommodation: Who Is Involved

"Language can reflect intraindividual, interindividual, intergroup and institutional characteristics" (Giles & Wiemann: 354). Given the fact that John is a document whose author and audience are no longer available for direct scrutiny and given the fact that first-century Mediterraneans were anti-introspective, collectivistic personalities (see Malina 1994), I would not expect to find any certain intraindividual linguistic features. The psycholinguistic data are simply absent, and perhaps not very useful for exegetical purposes anyway. The document does, however, reveal a few interpersonal features and a host of intergroup and institutional characteristics sufficient for an analysis at a social level.

Interindividual Dimensions

Interindividual situations are relational, depicting two persons, a couple, or a dyadic comparison. Here interaction is fully determined by interpersonal relationships and individual stereotypical characteristics, and not at all affected by various social groups to which interactants belong. From a cognitive perspective, initial encounters between people involve the reduction of uncertainty. Mutual interrogation followed by self-disclosures not only allows participants to make their partner more predictable but also engenders more certainty about responding "appropriately" themselves (cf. the initial encounters in John: e.g., Nathanael 1:43-51, Nicodemus 3:1-15, the Samaritan woman 4:7-42). Interpersonal encounters and apparent role relationships inevitably have an affective dimension. Address terms point to asymmetrical status and power roles. The author's description of aspects of physical features in such encounters (e.g., nonverbal distancing patterns, differences in interpersonal space, backward or forward lean, differences in gazing patterns) equally take on pragmatic significance and point up status and/or solidarity differences. Many of these descriptive features are distinctive of John (see the sections below, on Public/Personal and Hesitant/Spontaneous).

Intergroup Dimensions

Group situations depicting outsiders are intergroup interactions. Here interactions are fully determined by interactants' memberships in various social groups and are not at all affected by interindividual personal relationships. The more persons see the interaction as intergroup, the more

behavioral uniformity do persons display toward outgroup members, and the more they will treat them in an undifferentiated manner rather than as individuals. When individuals identify with a social group, they desire to derive satisfaction from their membership in it. The realization of the affect associated with ingroup identity comes through; this results in the expression of intergroup comparisons between the position of one's own group and that of other groups on such valued dimensions as power, loyalty and solidarity, influence, and wealth.

When a member of a group defines an encounter subjectively as an intergroup phenomenon, he or she will wish to assume a positive social identity by differentiation from those who are outgroup members (note the conversation in which Peter denies Jesus, John 18:25-26; see Giles & Wiemann: 358). People who wish to join a new group will begin to speak like members of that group, dropping the ways of speaking typical of their former group affiliations (note the shifts in the Samaritan woman's language as the interaction proceeds, John 4:7-26).

Indeed it is no accident that cross-culturally what is 'standard,' 'correct,' and 'cultivated' language behavior is that of the aristocracy, the upper or ruling classes and their institutions; that is, the language of the most powerful—politically and economically [Giles & Wiemann: 361].

Thus second language learning is dramatically unidirectional! It is not the socially higher who learn to speak as the lower status people, but always the other way around. Hence it was Israelites and other Semites who learned Greek. Romans and other Hellenists did not learn Hebrew and Aramaic. Significantly, in spite of their roots in first-century Israelite society, all Christian documents are written in Greek, the language of civilized Hellenism.

Social identity, mentioned previously, is concerned with behavior at the intergroup level in terms of highly general, typical features. The more individuals define situations in intergroup terms and desire to maintain or achieve a positive ingroup identity, the more likely they will be to diverge in language from the other group. In other words, the more a member of the Johannine group defined himself or herself as part of that group and sought to achieve or maintain a positive ingroup identity, the more that member would converge with the discourse mode typical of John. Of course that "disciple" would likewise diverge from the discourse mode typical of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or Paul.

For John and his group, Jesus was revealer of God, Son of God who enabled those in the association themselves to experience God as children (John 1:12). Jesus was not concerned with any theocracy for Israel; there is no proclamation of God's kingdom in that Gospel. Rather, Jesus was concerned with giving the Spirit to all who would believe in

God's presence in him (John 19:30; see Neyrey: 182-215). Redemption and salvation are of little concern. The mode of discourse that articulated such positions would situate the associates of John's group on some intergroup status hierarchy. As an association clearly rejected by the Judeans, among other groups, and equally avoided by other Christian associations (see 3 John), John's group seems to claim preeminence since it allows for no compromise whatsoever. The way it is treated replicates the way in which its Lord was treated. John's group claims superiority over other Christian groups, expecting them to join the John group ("that they may be one!" John 17:11).

The fact that authors generally tend to accommodate to their audience allows us to believe that the author of John tended to converge with his group. Members of that group must have formed a maverick Christian association if John's Gospel made sense to them. Speech accommodation means John's association shared many of his viewpoints, attitudes, and perspectives, if not everything that he sets forth. Given first-century Mediterranean cultural constraints, from a document like John we learn nothing of the author, more about the document, but much more about the intended receiver.

Documents from antiquity are receiver focused in more ways than one. To read them from the viewpoint of modern authorship with its focus on the individualism of the subject and the paraphernalia of the Romantic period is historically inaccurate. John's Gospel reveals to us John's community, and the reason for this is the author's desire to communicate. Of course the same may be said of the rest of the Second Testament documents. They reveal precious little of their authors, including Paul, regardless of what so many people have said and written. And they necessarily, if not exclusively, reveal information about the groups to which they were addressed. Those who argue for "community authorship" (e.g., Culpepper) are closer to the truth than those who would single out the personality of the author.

Antilanguage

To interpret documents requires the interpreter to trace back the meanings realized through texts to a culturally and historically appropriate social system. The question I wish to consider here is similar to that of traditional form critics: what sort of social system does John's wording realize? (See my previous treatment, Malina 1985). More narrowly, what sort of situation, what set of concerns, might adequately explain the document called the Gospel of John? Along with literary critics, past and present, I too will begin with the wording level of language, the language of text, sentence, and word, of style, syntax, and lexicography.

John's Wording Level

Perhaps the simplest way to approach John is to note its author's distinctive development of and penchant for new words in place of old ones. This trait bespeaks *language relexicalized*, but only partially. Its implicit principle seems to be "same grammar but different vocabulary," though only in certain areas. And these areas are those of central concern to the focal interests and activities of John's group. In John, this concern is articulated as follows: "that you may continue to believe that Jesus in the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). In other words, the author of John is concerned with spelling out the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah and in developing emotional anchorage "in Jesus" for his collectivity. It is to this end that the author develops his very different vocabulary.

Too Many Words: Overlexicalization

Furthermore, John does not simply relexicalize in his area of concern, but he *overlexicalizes* by employing a rather large range of lexical items to cover the same area. First of all, note his contrasts between spirit, the above, life, light, not of the/this world, freedom, truth, love, and their opposites: flesh, the below, death, darkness, the/this world, slavery, lie, hate. These words are variants used to describe contrasting spheres of existence, opposing modes of living and being. Similarly, and with extremely little appreciable difference in meaning, John speaks of "believing into Jesus" or "following" him, of "abiding in" him or "loving" him, of "keeping his word," of "receiving" him, or "having" him, or "seeing" him.

Interpersonal Focus: Not Many Ideas

John likewise evidences a distinctive emphasis in the range of meanings communicated in the work. Languages can be said to entail three linguistic modes of meaning: the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual. The ideational refers to what is being said or described; the interpersonal looks to the personal qualities of the communicating partners; and the textual pertains to the qualities of any piece of language to form text (such as cohesion). Again, what one says is ideational, with whom one speaks is interpersonal, and how one speaks is textual (see Halliday 1978:8-36; the model on 69 and its explanation on 125-26). I single out these components here because John typically deemphasizes the ideational (what he has to say) and focuses solely upon the interpersonal (with whom the conversation occurs) and textual (how one speaks). Thus Jesus can be "Revealer," with little or nothing to reveal (a solution to the confusion of Bultmann 1971, *passim*). For example, a comparison of the text of John (the whole Gospel as story) with the texts of the Synoptics will readily indicate that John

downplays the ideational feature of language. For in John there is no progressive description of who Jesus is, no progressively mounting opposition from enemies, no progressive presentation of Jesus' ministry and teaching, no special "gospel" of Jesus, no interest in the "kingdom of Heaven" or on the revitalization of Israel. All John really has to say is said in the prologue: We can become "children of God" because "God's Utterance has been enfleshed and has taken up residence in our midst" (John 1:12, 14). The vignettes in the Gospel are variations on this theme.

On the other hand, John certainly highlights the interpersonal and textual functions of language. The linguistic dimensions of *how* Jesus speaks (textual component) and *with whom* he speaks (interpersonal component) come through in a way not found in the Synoptic narratives. Halliday notes that it is these two dimensions (interpersonal and textual) that account for overlexicalization. For example, overlexicalization based on the *textual* function of language (how Jesus speaks, how others speak to Jesus) is revealed in forms of verbal display such as punning and word play. This feature is quite apparent in John's pattern of ambiguity, misunderstanding, and clarification (John 2:19ff; 3:3ff; 4:10ff; 4:32ff; 6:33ff; 8:31ff; 8:38ff; 11:11ff; 11:23ff; 13:8ff; 14:4ff; 14:7ff; 14:21ff; 16:16ff). These text-segments reveal, respectively, verbal display or word-plays relative to the following: the destruction of the temple, being born again, water, food, bread, freedom, father, sleep, resurrection, washing, way, seeing, manifestation, and a little while.

As for the *interpersonal* component, overlexicalization deriving from this function of language (who is involved, of whom and to whom Jesus speaks) is indicated by the set of words that have the same denotation but quite a different connotation based on the attitude and commitment they entail in an interpersonal context. This includes, for example, all the "I am . . ." statements previously referred to. The words *bread* (John 6:35), *light* (8:12), *door* (10:9), *life* (11:25-26), *way* (14:6), and *vine* (15:5) have the same denotation in the contexts in which they are employed; they refer to various real-world objects. When identified with Jesus in an "I am . . ." proposition, however, each takes on some interpersonal dimension. The synonyms for the activities of discipleship ("to believe, come, abide, follow, love, keep words, receive, have, see") and those for the two contrasting realms ("the above, spirit," etc., and "the below, flesh," etc., listed previously) point in the same direction, i.e., to the interpersonal component of language.

This orientation toward the interpersonal and textual modes of the linguistic system accounts for the way *social values* are foregrounded, highlighted, and underscored in antilanguage. This sort of emphasis on social values indicates that John and his group seek the implementation of new values in place of old ones, not new structures. The

Synoptics and Paul, on the other hand, emphasize new structures in place of old ones. The new structures are fictive kin-groups called "church" or "the body of Christ" or those "in Christ" and the like. Emphasis on new structures underscores and features the ideational mode of the linguistic system. What is in fact happening and what should in fact be happening are emphasized, while who is involved and what is said are of lesser concern.

Defining Antilanguage

The consistent relexicalization and overlexicalization along with a focus on the interpersonal and modal aspect of language point to what Halliday has labeled "antilanguage" (1978: 164-82). "Antilanguage" is the language of an "anti-society," that is, "a society that is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it. It is a mode of resistance, resistance which may take the form either of passive symbiosis or of active hostility and even destruction" (*ibid.* 171). The instances of antilanguage that Halliday studied include the language of individuals put into prison as well as into reform schools in Poland, of members of the underworld in India, and of vagabonds in Elizabethan England. All these individuals formed groups that were in fact anti-societies set up within a larger, broader society, and in this setting their language came to express their social experience. Antilanguage and antisociety go hand in hand. Or, as Giblett notes: "There can be no society without language, and no antisociety without an antilanguage" (Giblett: 1).

It is curious to note that antisocieties, as a rule, have a negative relation to prevailing custom or law.

They are either on the margins of the law, or they have broken the law. They are not outside society, but an outside hollowed within society. They are both objects of the power of the law and subjects of their own counter-language which resists and undermines the power of the law [Giblett: 2].

Just as society is not opposed to antisociety, so too language is not opposed to antilanguage. As a matter of fact, users of normal language more or less understand antilanguage but miss the full meaning realized by the latter since normal language users do not inhabit the antisociety nor share its social system. And it is antisociety that is opposed to society, antilanguage to language. Halliday notes that "antilanguage arises when the alternative reality is a counter-reality, set up in opposition to some established norm" (1978: 171).

What this means is that the individuals comprised in John's group were not rejected by their opponents because of anything in John's Gospel. The Gospel does not present the beliefs and attitudes of group members that led to their expulsion by others. Rather John's Gospel reflects the alternate reality John's group set up in opposition to its oppo-

nents, notably "this world" and "the Judeans." In the eyes of these opponents, John's group was anomalous. Because of the way it experienced God (as God's children did, John 1:12, contrary to "this world") and because of its belief in Jesus as distinctive Messiah (contrary to "the Judeans"), it stood either on the margins of community standards or broke those standards. On the margins, John's group was not illegal, but in a space which the custom or law did not (or could not) cover because the group was not really subject to the law. Or as norm breakers, the group subsisted in an outside location hollowed within society. In that location, it was the object of the power of community norms, but its members acted as subjects of their own antilanguage, which resisted and undermined the power of those community norms. Like all antilanguage, John's too is "consciously used for strategic purposes, defensively to maintain a particular social reality or offensively for resistance and protest" (Halliday 1978: 178-79). In other words, an antilanguage is a language deriving from and generated by an antisocietal group. And an antisocietal group is an association that is set up within a larger society as a conscious alternative to it.

The reasons why persons come up with conscious alternatives to the society in which they are in some way embedded are varied and many. Sociolinguists can suggest a range of reasons. Persons might be labeled as deviant and treated with active hostility by members of society at large. Or a given category of persons might experience total lack of social concern, resulting in their living in the greater society in a state of passive social symbiosis. Or persons might be exiled or rejected because of negative outcomes of an uprising or revolt and thus be forced to fend for themselves. Finally, persons might be confined to concentration camps, maximum security prisons, restricted wards in mental hospitals, and the like.

All such persons are variously labeled as deviants: whether sinners, unbelievers, apostates, dissidents, subversives, prisoners, inmates, or patients. As deviants, they often undergo daily and progressive public disconfirmation of their ability to act as adult persons. Their movements and choices are restricted. In extreme cases, officials of the broader society publicly evaluate them in terms of a moral system that socially denies that they are capable of being genuine agents on their own behalf. To use contemporary terms, they are declared to be non-persons. Their movements and utterances are denied the status of significant human actions. Since what they say and do is defined as mere behavior, going through meaningless motions, they must be, so it is pronounced, without capacities to act in human fashion. Antilanguage and its generating alternate society derive from individuals who have experienced socially sanctioned depersonalization (see Harris: 606).

In John's case, the document does point to an audience composed of individuals that emerged from and stands opposed to society and its competing groups. Concretely, the notable groups that John's collectivity opposes include Hellenistic society at large, that is "the/world" (79 times in John, 9 times in Matt, and 3 each in Mark and Luke), and Judean society, "the Judeans" (71 times in John, 5 times in Matt and Luke, 7 times in Mark). These groups adamantly refuse to believe in Jesus as Messiah. Brown (168-69) discerns four more groups in the document: the adherents of John the Baptist who do not as yet believe in Jesus, and three groups that claim to believe in Jesus: crypto-Christians, Christians from the house of Israel, and Christians of the apostolic churches. This last group is perhaps "the sheep not of this fold" (John 10:16) with which John's group has some relationship through the "shepherd." John's antilanguage is a form of resistance to this range of competing groups and develops for positive and negative reasons, to be considered shortly.

Antilanguage is not simply a specialized variety of language such as technical variety of ordinary language used in a special way or in particular, technical contexts (e.g., technical jargons, argots, and the like). Rather, an antilanguage arises among persons in groups espousing and held by alternative perceptions of reality, reality as experienced and set up in opposition to some established mode of conception and perception. Consequently, an antilanguage is nobody's "mother tongue," nor is it a predictable "mother tongue" derivative. Rather antilanguage exists solely in a social context of resocialization. Like any other language, it is a means of realizing the social (sub-)system and cultural script of the group in question, a means of expressing perceptions of the reality mediated by that script by actively creating and maintaining the reality by means of language. But unlike ordinary language, antilanguage creates and expresses a reality that is inherently an alternative reality, one that is constructed precisely in order to function as an alternative to society at large. In the antilanguage of John, we find the expression of an alternative to the society of first-century Mediterranean Hellenism in general, and of the Judean version of Israelite ideology in particular. John's group is an alternative to "this world" and to "the Judeans." Thus what is significant in antilanguage is not its distance from the language of Hellenistic Judea, but the tension between the two. Both the Hellenistic "Judeans" at large and the alternative group share the same overarching system of meaning, just as both are part and parcel of the same overarching social system, "this world." Yet they stand in opposition to and in tension with one another. The reason for underscoring this point is that to appreciate the new values and perceptions generated by an antisocietal collectivity, one

must understand the larger society to which it stands opposed.

The Functions of Antilanguage

What uses do antilanguages serve? Halliday observes that antilanguages are generally replications of social forms based on highly distinctive values that are clearly set apart from those of the society from which the antisocietal members derive. Like language itself, antilanguage is the bearer of social reality, but of an alternative social reality that runs counter to the social reality of society at large. Thus antilanguage serves to maintain inner solidarity (= "love") under pressure. The pressure, of course, stems from the surrounding broader society from which the group members originally came and in which they are to a large extent still embedded. Furthermore, for individuals to maintain solidarity with their fellow antisocietal members and not fall back into the margins of the groups they left or from which they were ejected, some sort of alternative ideology along with emotional anchorage in the new collectivity is necessary. This necessity is best served by demonstrations of mutual care and concern on the part of those in the antisocietal group so as to establish strong affective identification on the part of newcomers into the group as well as those on its fringes ready to swing out. Of course, this describes the process of resocialization (See Mol: 50-54; 142-201). Just as language is crucial for the social interpretation of reality and for the socialization of new members into that reality, so too antilanguage is crucial for the social reinterpretation of reality and for the resocialization of newcomers into that reality. John is an instance of such antilanguage in the Christian tradition.

Resocialization

From the viewpoint of linguistics, the process of resocialization and solidarity maintenance makes special demands on the antilanguage. In particular, the antilanguage in question must facilitate the process of establishing strongly affective ties with both the reputational legitimate authority who is the central influence in the collectivity ("the disciple whom Jesus loved") and significant others in the group (the "disciples"). And this process has to be geared to the individual group member, just as the original socialization process was. Now, the linguistic genre most appropriate to this end is conversation and its implicit modes of reciprocity. In John, again, there is ample evidence of distinctive conversations with Jesus that serve a resocialization function (John 3:1-4:42; 5:10ff; 6:22ff; 9:13-10:42; 11:1-44; 11:45-12:36a; 13-17). How these conversations unfold is common knowledge. Jesus begins to converse with some individual person, moves on to address that person in monologue fashion, and the monologue turns into an address to

the reader/hearer. Throughout these text-segments, there is heavy foregrounding of interpersonal meanings directed to individuals. It seems that these conversations are the feature of John that holds constant and perennial appeal for individualistically oriented persons. Jesus speaks to them in an individual way, not as group members as is the case in the Synoptics (or for the addressees of the remaining Second Testament writings). It must be emphasized that it is John's characteristic antilanguage that accounts for this feature of the Gospel. (In this regard, the use of the pronoun *you* singular in Greek is distinctive: 60 times in John, 10 times in Mark, 18 in Matt and 26 times in Luke; similarly the pronoun *you* plural in Greek, 68 times in John, 11 in Mark, 30 in Matt, and 28 times in Luke—such emphatic use of the pronoun in Greek simply underscores the interpersonal dimension.)

The alternative reality generated by groups such as John's has certain implications. First of all, it implies an emphasis on new core values and an attempt to create standards and situations to implement those values. It likewise implies a preoccupation with social boundaries, with social definition and defense of identity by means of repeated and varied articulation of the new reality now so clearly perceived. Of course both these points are realized in John's strong contrast between the above, spirit, etc., and the below, flesh, etc., and the forms of experience proper to each. Further, the counter-reality in question implies a special conception of information and knowledge—a feature more than amply highlighted in John (the word "to know" occurs more than 150 times). Finally, such counter-reality implies that social meanings will be seen as oppositions, values are defined in terms of what they are *not*. Again, in John it is quite clear that Jesus' signs are simply not about what is going on, i.e., healing or rescue, but about something more and something other than one can ostensibly witness. Perhaps the clearest articulation of this process is to be found in the narrative of the man born blind (John 9:1–41).

Further, as Halliday has observed, the overlexicalization of antilanguages is a form of variant in linguistics. In general, a variant is an alternative realization of a linguistic element on the next, or some higher, level of abstraction in the linguistic system. A higher level realization always has the same meaning in some respect as the items falling beneath it. For example, the lexical items "fruit," "vegetables," "meat," and "bread" have "food" as their variant. "Food" is an alternative realization of a linguistic element such as "bread" or "meat" on a higher level in the linguistic system. Similarly, this higher level realization, "food," always has the same meaning in some respect as the items falling beneath it, in this case "fruit," "vegetables," "meat," and "bread." Thus "fruit" can mean "food," "vegetables" can mean "food," "meat" can mean "food," and "bread" can mean "food," while

the lexical item "food" can be used to mean any of the foregoing; they are technically variants of the word "food." Similarly, in John "spirit, the above, life, light, not of the/this world, freedom, truth, love" are all variants of the "new reality" that John identifies with and in Jesus of Nazareth. On the contrary, "the flesh, the below, death, darkness, this/the world, slavery, lie, hate" are all variants of what John and the collectivity addressed in the work oppose, the "old reality" of the society from which they came.

Uniquely New Meanings

However, the significant thing about the lexical items (words and sentences) distinctive of an antilanguage, as Halliday notes, is that many of them have no equivalent meanings at all in the standard language of the broader society. Sentences such as "I and the Father [=God] are one" (John 10:30) and "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (8:56); or the identification of Jesus of Nazareth with the pre-existing Word of God become flesh (1:1ff) would simply be meaningless in the language of the broader society. This does not mean that they could not be understood and judged to me meaningless, or that they could not be translated (after all, our English versions do them adequate justice). Rather, what it does mean is that such propositions do not function as meaning-bearing language in the semantic system of regular language, even the regular "religious" language of contemporary early Christianity and the house of Israel. It is quite significant to note that there are no such sentences in the writings of Paul, the other Gospels, or the other non-Johannine Second Testament documents.

Metaphorical Meaning

The foregoing considerations point to the fact that an antilanguage is a metaphor for the regular language of society at large. Metaphorization takes place when some common, often implicit, quality proper to one entity is predicated of another; e.g., "My brother is a lion." Here the implicit property is strength or ferocity; thus the explicit sentence would read: "My brother is as strong as/as ferocious as a lion." In antilanguage, such a metaphorical quality appears all the way through the system. Halliday tells us that *it is this metaphorical quality that defines an antilanguage*. This metaphorical quality can be seen in the "I am . . ." statements in John's Gospel, where Jesus says of himself: "I am bread, light, a door, life, way, vine" and the like. The metaphorical quality inherent in the list of ambiguity-misunderstanding-clarification sequences noted previously also point to the same thing. Metaphor constitutes the element of antilanguage that is present in all language to some extent. For much of everyday language is in fact metaphorical, e.g., horsepower in an automobile, a cell in biology, conceiving ideas. Yet the metaphorical quality of everyday language is

lost and has come to be identified with regular speech, with reality itself. On the other hand, what distinguishes an antilanguage is that when it is compared with the existing language system of the culture in which it emerges and the society against which it stands, it is itself a metaphorical entity. Hence in antilanguage, metaphorical modes of expression are the norm. Metaphorical modes of expression are an antilanguage's regular pattern of realization.

As pointed out previously, the main form of discourse used in socialization and in reality maintenance is conversation. The reality generating and maintaining power of language lies in conversation. It is cumulative and depends for its effectiveness on continuous enforcement in social interaction. Now, John's Gospel is really the only Second Testament writing presenting extended conversations. Furthermore, all the great Johannine metaphors emerge in conversations. Their metaphorical points are made in conversation, thus maintaining the resocialization quality of the work in the reader's/hearer's being addressed by Jesus in these conversations as the dialogue becomes monologue. In the resocialization process conversation relies heavily upon foregrounding and highlighting interpersonal meanings, and the great Johannine conversations surely do that. Finally, conversation depends for its power to generate reality on its being casual. In John, again, Jesus' many and frequent conversations so often point to casual encounters with individuals with whom the group member can empathize and thus take on the role of conversation partner as Jesus moves on to monologue in the second part of these conversations.

A final point Halliday makes is that within the ideational mode of meaning (what is being talked about), an antilanguage may adopt linguistic structures and lexical collocations that are self-consciously opposed to the norms of established language. This is typical of the more intellectual antilanguages. Now, there is evidence of this feature in John, although many such items are "translated out" in English versions, e.g., in John the verb "to believe" most often has the preposition "into"; Jesus refers to his death as "being lifted up"; and for John seeing is believing throughout the story of Jesus' activity. Consequently, the modes of linguistic expression in antilanguage, when seen from the standpoint of the established language, appear diffuse, roundabout, and metaphorical—and so they are, from that angle.

But seen on their own terms, they appear direct and forceful, powerful manifestations of the linguistic system in the service of socialization into a new reality. It is the reality being experienced and newly interpreted that is oblique, since it can be seen only as a metaphorical transformation of the "true" reality of the greater society. But the function of an antilanguage text with respect to that reality is a reinforcing one, all the more direct because it is a reality that

needs much reinforcement. It is the new reality, the new experience and perceptions, of their group.

It should be clear by now that John is, indeed, quite different from the other Gospels and that John's group was quite different from other Christian associations in the first-century Mediterranean. The foregoing considerations deriving from sociolinguistics point up precisely why this is the case. One can readily see the quality of the John group: John writes for persons actually living in an alternate society embedded in a larger society, that of "this world" and of "Judeans." While we may presume that John's social situation does not determine his personal genius or the exact form that his work has taken, we can be reasonably certain that this social situation did determine and define the limits within which he was able to select features that would make sense to his audience as well as the general shape of the patterns of perception available to members of his group. The perceptions of the author of John and of the association to which he belonged were realized and articulated in language, and John's language is antilanguage.

Speech Accommodation, Antilanguage, and Love

While many persons are motivated to read the Gospels to "follow Christ" and discover a way of life, those who read John are bound to be disappointed. For aside from the ritual of foot-washing (standing for forgiveness and reconciliation; see Malina 1993: 75–83) and Jesus' insistence that his disciples follow his commandments, only a single commandment is to be found in the whole Gospel: the commandment to "love one another." What is curious about this Gospel, then, is that it has little if any indication of what it takes to be a disciple except to be attached to Jesus and to the group. Thus the foot-washing ritual and the love command are the burden of John for the ingroup. There are really no other commandments.

Yet speech accommodation theory suggests that the successful author must converge with the audience. Within the framework of an antisociety, the thrust of antilanguage is to underscore the interpersonal and result in bonding among members. Jesus' repeated love command in John does the same and looks to identical outcomes. Such interpersonal solidarity and bonding requires a degree of intimacy (see Knapp 1983, 1984). "Intimacy . . . refers to variations in knowledge of and/or commitment to one's relationship partner" (Knapp 1983: 192). As a sort of appendix to our consideration of John's speech accommodation and antilanguage, I should like to present a typology of linguistic features that underscore group attachment in terms of intimacy. Knapp has developed a scale of the general dimen-

sions of communication associated with relationship development. The scale moves in either direction from more to less intimacy and vice-versa. The dimensions he employs represent the content, diversity, quality, patterning, and interpretation of messages and interactions (Knapp 1983; 1984: 13-23).

Knapp's General Dimensions of Communication Associated with Relationship Development

Toward more intimacy ⇒

⇐ Toward less intimacy

Narrow	Broad
Stylized	Unique
Difficult	Efficient
Rigid	Flexible
Awkward	Smooth
Public	Personal
Hesitant	Spontaneous
Overt Judgment Suspended	Overt Judgment Given

After briefly presenting each of these features, I offer a sampling of evidence from John to indicate how John's language moves toward greater intimacy throughout the work.

Narrow/Broad

This dimension refers to the variety and quality of messages communicated: a contracting or expanding number of messages as well as the refinement of ideas and feelings to communicate. John surely points to an expanding number of messages for group members:

Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified [John 7:39].

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you [John 14:26].

I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come [John 16:12-13].

But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written [John 21:25].

Presumably persons in John's group knew about these "many other things" and shared their information with group members.

Stylized/Unique

First contact with others takes place in terms of stylized behavior widely employed and understood by others. As a person gets to know another better in terms of difference from others, greater intimacy is revealed by more personalized communication devices adapted to the peculiar nature of the interactants.

Intimates develop more specialized and unique communication patterns adapted to the particular characteristics of their personalities and relationship. Consider the opening conversations with those who would become intimates:

He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter) [John 1:42].

Jesus gives Simon a nickname right from the outset. Ingroup nicknames are an indication of unique relations.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" [John 1:47-49].

Again, notice the lavish title, right from the outset, again, pointing to unique relations.

Further indications in the direction of uniqueness: Jesus' knowledge of the Samaritan woman's singular situation of having five husbands and her recognizing him as "prophet" (John 4:17-19); Mary, sister of Lazarus, anointing Jesus (John 11:2); Jesus' socially outrageous washing of his disciple's feet (John 13:5).

Less intimacy is indicated, however, by return to stylized expressions. Judas' kiss (Mark 14:45; Matt 26:49; Luke 22:47-48) was a stylized greeting of a friend. Mention of this kiss is lacking in John (but not Judas' traitorous presence: John 18:2-3, perhaps alluding to previous intimate relationship).

Difficult/Efficient

As intimacy increases, there is a gradual increase in accuracy and efficiency of communication. This is a dimension of supplying context. Greater intimacy points to high context communication in which relatively little has to be spelled out. The whole of John's Gospel, directed at the ingroup as it is, is an instance of extremely high context communication.

I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he [John 13:19].

Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him; so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by

saying, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'?" [John 16:19].

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing" [John 20:27].

On the other hand, no intimacy points to extremely low context. The ignorance of outgroup persons indicates misunderstanding and non-understanding, hence low-context situations, requiring much explanation and clarification:

When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really the prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So there was a division among the people over him [John 7:40-43].

On the other hand, high context may give rise to overconfidence that leads to periods of difficulty—periods when old assumptions are no longer valid (hence misunderstanding and non-understanding).

Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or "Why are you talking with her?" [John 4:27].

Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" [John 11:16].

Rigid/Flexible

As persons know each other, they are able to communicate the same idea or feeling in several different ways. This is what flexibility points to. Yet it is possible that only some messages are subjected to message flexibility, while others are not. On the other hand, new acquaintances and persons terminating relationships have fewer channels of communication and maintain more consistent ways of communicating any given message.

Previously, I noted that the synonyms for the activities of discipleship and being related to Jesus ("to believe, come, abide, follow, love, keep words, receive, have, see") and the terms for the two contrasting realms ("the above, spirit," etc., and "the below, flesh," etc.) point in the direction of the antilanguage, interpersonal component of language. Yet it is equally true that this whole vocabulary fits this flexibility pattern that moves in the direction of intimacy.

Awkward/Smooth

Intimates have an inclination toward fusion—psychologically and behaviorally. They understand what the other is up to; they can anticipate moves and choices. They often accommodate their language styles to those of others in order to enhance perceptions of similarity and to increase attraction. The metaphor of Jesus the vine points to social

fusion in John's association (John 15:1-7). One cannot get closer than "Abide in me, and I in you" (15:4). Disciples will even find the words for such smooth speech:

For I have given them [the disciples] the words which you [God] gave me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you did send me [John 17:8].

New acquaintances display less interpersonal meshing or synchrony; they are more awkward and less synchronized. Yet some people show a high degree of smoothness on certain limited topics (e.g., salesmen, TV preachers, con men).

Public/Personal

We first reveal our public selves to others. As intimacy increases, we gradually reveal more and more of our personal and private selves to our relationship partners. Revelation of personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs provide personal information. Such access to the personal sphere is replicated in (1) increased proximity, (2) more bodily touching in general, (3) touching certain body parts inaccessible to others, (4) looking into the eyes of another for extended periods, (5) looking at another's body or specific body parts, (6) relaxation of any body tension suggesting a "guarded" approach, etc. Verbalized feedback increases as intimacy increases.

In John this movement from public to private comes through in the very structure of the work. From John 1:19 to 12:50 we are amid the outgroup, as the disciples observe greater and lesser degrees of closeness with Jesus, but from 13:1 to 17:26 we are in the exclusive presence of the ingroup and privacy. John reports a well wrought piece of personal revelation simply not meant for the public. That the disciples are moving in this direction even in the first part of the story is indicated by Peter: "Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'" (John 6:68).

With the collapse of intimacy, behaviors representing public selves increase.

Hesitant/Spontaneous

Intimacy brings an increase in spontaneity, a lack of observable planning. Knapp notes that the explicitness of a person's hesitancy or spontaneity may vary, but nonverbal indications in gesture such as the style and speed of gestures and their quality underscore the spontaneity of the direction of intimacy or its opposite. Communication with new acquaintances and former intimates (less predictable others) is likely to be cautious and hesitant.

Thus in John we find spontaneity, hence intimacy, indicated by the following:

One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus; so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks." So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot [John 13:23-26].

Perhaps the same is indicated by the behavior of Mary, sister of Lazarus (John 11:2) and of Thomas, who acts like a former intimate restored to intimacy by Jesus' invitation: "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side" (John 20:27).

Overt Evaluation Suspended/Given

With intimates, we begin sharing our previously covert evaluations, first in general and positive dimensions, and subsequently with both positive and negative feedback. Further, evaluations move beyond stereotypical cues and are articulated to intimates with highly significant evaluative signals. The longer intimates are with one another, the more they have at stake. Evaluations are avoided in emotionally sensitive areas.

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" [John 14:9].

All the dimensions of intimacy generally stabilize within a range that is below the peak achieved or achievable. Yet even in more intimate relationships, the discussion of certain topics or on certain occasions may take on the qualities of non-intimate relationships. Significantly in John's story, Jesus presumably broaches an off-limits topic when he really never tells his disciples where he is ultimately going:

"A little while, and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me." some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I go to the Father?'" They said, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he means." Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him; so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy" [John 16:16-20].

Even worse, he tells them they cannot come anyway:

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Judeans so now I say to you, "Where I am going you cannot come" [John 13:13].

Conclusion

In sum, the whole of John abounds in statements, scenes, and behavioral descriptions that are redolent of "love," that is, of group attachment, of the interpersonal dimension of language—in sum, of intimacy. The story of Jesus moves in the direction of greater intimacy between Jesus and his own. In fact, in the end, the focal personage in the story with whom the audience would identify is the disciples whom Jesus loved, the beloved disciple (13:23; 18:15-16; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).

While speech accommodation theory and the sociolinguistic mode of analysis are simply first steps to understanding the Johannine group by means of the text of John, they are important first steps. For they furnish insight into and an explanation for the distinctive Johannine ways of describing God and human relations with God. This insight and explanation, of course, are rooted in the social behavior of John's association, behavior used as analogy to explain the God revealed in Jesus. Further, this mode of analysis enables the interpreter to come to know and appreciate the personages who embodied faith in Jesus in first-century Mediterranean contexts typical of alternate societies—their willingness to identify Jesus as access to the divinity of Israelite tradition, their self-distancing from their original mooring in temple-based Israelite Yahwism, and their emphatic stance relative to interpersonal commitment within their group.

And it helps the modern student to discover the sort of persons to be found in that difficult yet exhilarating social situation, persons who made sense of the overarching meaning of human existence "in Jesus" in highly creative and significant ways. Finally, such analysis highlights the ever-present problem of individuals and their groups who lived in alternate societies. Alternate societies are impermanent arrangements within a broader society. Persons who form alternate societies must eventually face the need to return to stable society and an articulation of Christianity befitting such stable society. Perhaps the Johannine letters likewise intimate this movement, with the beginnings of the dissolution of John's antisocial group.

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