

Introduction

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NORMS are essential to the human condition. Whether in the guise of tradition, culture, canon or rules, norms are therefore central to studies in the humanities. This book focuses on Russian language culture of the post-revolutionary and post-Soviet periods, times when norms—linguistic and otherwise—have been eagerly debated, challenged, broken and redefined.

Like Russian society at large, Russian language culture has undergone dramatic changes over the last hundred years. The revolution of 1917 precipitated a reform of the Russian alphabet, drawing a visible typographic line between the old and the new orders. The following decade saw a boom in experiments in linguistic practices from public speaking to literary fiction.¹ Roman Jakobson later referred to the linguistic turbulence of the early Soviet years as an *Erdrutsch der Norm*—a Landslide of the Norm²—a metaphor that was taken as the title for the international research project of which this book is a result.³ Stalin's rise to power triggered a reaction to the experiments and led to the introduction of the *kul'tura rechi*—a prescriptive movement to promote the norms of Standard Russian.⁴ During this period, Standard Russian was fortified

1 Michael S. Gorham, 2003, *Speaking in Soviet Tongues: Language Culture and the Politics of Voice in Revolutionary Russia*, DeKalb, Illinois.

2 Roman Jakobson, 1934, "Slavische Sprachfragen in der Sowjetunion," *Slavische Rundschau* 6 (5), pp. 324–43; and Heinrich Kirschbaum in this volume.

3 The full title of the project is "Landslide of the Norm: linguistic liberalization and literary development in Russia in the 1920s and 1990s." For more information, see the project web site: <http://www.hf.uib.no/i/russisk/landslide/home.html>.

4 Michael S. Gorham, 2010, "Language Ideology and the Evolution of *Kul'tura iazyka* ("Speech Culture") in Soviet Russia," forthcoming in *Politics and the Theory of Language in the USSR 1917–1938*, eds. C. Brandist & K. Chown, London.

by the appearance of academic grammars and dictionaries. At the same time, Soviet writers witnessed the establishment of an obligatory Writers' Union and the introduction of Socialist Realism as a precept for their work.

The post-Stalin period was characterized by an absence of linguistic debates, and the language of the public sphere was "hyper-normalized," to borrow a term from Alexei Yurchak.⁵ At the same time, the emerging underground literature gave room for alternative linguistic practices. The hypernormalization ruling was sidelined by Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms and the introduction of *Glasnost*'—openness, which implied not only a possibility to discuss things formerly forbidden, but also to do so in language that had hitherto been considered unsuitable for the public sphere. The result of the new openness was shocking to many Russians, as it allowed for a surge in linguistic practices that tolerated ruthless profanities, thief argot, youth slang, peripheral dialects etc.⁶ Some of the reactions were in response to the publication of formerly forbidden works of the literary underground. The new linguistic trends became even more apparent after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, which also led to a massive influx of words from English, the language of globalization.⁷ Thus, the past hundred years of Russian language culture have been a history of alternation between periods dominated by heavily centralized linguistic authority and periods of inspired linguistic experiments. The terms we choose often reveal our sympathies, and where some see linguistic experimentation, others lament norm violations.⁸

Norms are both a result of and a precondition for human interaction. The term "norm" was given prominence in modern linguistics by Eugenio Coseriu,⁹ whose work on the relationship between the linguistic

5 Alexei Yurchak, 2006, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, Princeton & Oxford.

6 Four volumes edited by Leonid Krysin give a good insight into Russian research on this topic: L.P. Krysin, ed. 2000, 2003, 2004, 2006, *Russkii iazyk segodnia*, vols. 1–4, Moscow. See also Ingunn Lunde & Tine Roesen, 2006, *Landslide of the Norm: Language Culture in Post-Soviet Russia* (Slavica Bergensia 6), Bergen.

7 Larissa Ryazanova-Clarke & Terence Wade, 1999, *The Russian Language Today*, London & New York.

8 Both sentiments are at work in Maksim A. Krongauz, 2007, *Russkii iazyk na grani nervnogo sryva*, Moscow.

9 Eugenio Coseriu, 1952, *Sistema, norma y habla*, Montevideo; John Earl Joseph, 1987, *Eloquence and Power: The Rise of Language Standards and Standard Languages*, Lon-

norm and system has been continued by Henning Andersen. In his development of Coseriu's theory, Andersen introduced the concept of "norm negotiations," central to this book.¹⁰ In general, the term negotiation can be understood in at least two different ways. The first evokes the sense of dealing with something difficult, the second emphasizes the sense of discussing a matter. The significance of the former sense is that, in the linguistic domain, we negotiate by using norms in such a way as to be able to convey a specific message. This sense focuses on norms as something given, which we use to reach a certain goal; we apply the existing linguistic norms in order to convey a message to others.

On the other hand, negotiation can be understood as a way of promoting one's own hypotheses about the character of norms at the expense of other hypotheses in the linguistic community. This is the case when linguistic norms become the subject of public debate in newspaper columns, on radio shows, or in internet blogs. Here the focus is on the changeability of norms. These can be dubbed *explicit* norm negotiations—the norms in question are lifted up for specific scrutiny—and such debates are a recognizable trait of modern language societies.¹¹ However, norm negotiations are not necessarily explicit. In fact any linguistic utterance can be understood as a statement in the ongoing negotiations of norms in its respective linguistic community. When speaking or writing we are constantly making choices between different, often conflicting norms. The choices we make between the various linguistic possibilities at our disposal signal a view on the particular norm in question. Such a "statement," in turn, contributes to the understanding in the linguistic community of the acceptability of this particular norm. These are *implicit*

don, p. 28; Luis Fernando Lara, 1983, "Le concept de norme dans la théorie d'Eugenio Coseriu," in *La norme linguistique: Textes colligés et présentés*, eds. É. Bédard & J. Maurais, Paris, pp. 153–77; p. 153.

10 Henning Andersen, 1989, "Understanding Linguistic Innovations," in *Language Change: Contributions to the Study of its Causes*, eds. L.E. Breivik & E.H. Jahr, Berlin, pp. 5–28, as well as his contribution in this volume.

11 This trait of modern language societies has been most precisely identified by Deborah Cameron: "[...] a great many people care deeply about linguistic matters; they do not merely speak their language, they also speak copiously and passionately about it." Deborah Cameron, 1995, *Verbal Hygiene*, London, p. ix. Emphasis in the original. See also James & Lesley Milroy, 1999, *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*, London; Laada Bilaniuk, 2005, *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Correction in Ukraine*, Ithaca.

norm negotiations. Whenever we speak, we take a stance in the ongoing negotiation of linguistic norms and thereby contribute to the constant recreation of language.

Following Roman Jakobson, the discussion of language can be described as a metadiscourse, where “meta” implies that we use language to discuss language itself.¹² An obvious example of such a metadiscourse is language debates, or simply comments on language. Similarly, prescriptive practices such as the writing of grammars and dictionaries, and the teaching of language, can be viewed as part of the metadiscourse, since they involve statements on the character of language. However, as we have seen above, metadiscourse on language is not necessarily made explicit. According to Andersen any linguistic utterance effectively contains a statement on language. Just like other statements they can be more or less pronounced, that is, strong or weak. Thus, the use of profanities (*mat*) in a parliamentary debate constitutes a stronger statement than the use of *mat* during a hunting trip, because the norms regulating the use of *mat* in the two settings are different.

The identification of two different modes of norm negotiation—explicit and implicit—provides an opportunity to discuss language culture at large, and to include linguistic practices from different fields within a common framework. The advantage of this approach is that it makes it possible to study at the same time both the formation of authoritative regulations connected to the standard language, and the creative responses to them in literature, folklore and the like.¹³

The focus on various kinds of norm negotiation also allows for the juxtaposition of professional and lay linguistic perspectives. The two have traditionally been treated separately, since professional linguists have generally been regarded as more capable of discussing linguistic matters in an objective way, while laymen have been accused of basing their arguments on emotive rather than rational considerations. We view this divide as one of degree rather than absolute, which is not to say that

12 Roman Jakobson, 1981 [1960], “Linguistics and Poetics,” in *Roman Jakobson: Selected Writings*, vol. 3, ed. S. Rudy, The Hague, pp. 18–51; 1985 [1976], “Metalanguage as a Linguistic Problem,” in *Roman Jakobson: Selected Writings*, vol. 7, ed. S. Rudy, The Hague, pp. 113–21.

13 In addition to her contribution to this volume, see Ingunn Lunde, 2009, “Footnotes of a Graphomaniac: The Language Question in Evgenii Popov’s *True Story of ‘The Green Musicians’*,” *Russian Review* 68 (1), pp. 70–88.

there is no difference in the way professional linguists and laymen talk about language; our point is simply that it is impossible to draw a clear line between the two categories, as both groups are influenced by certain language ideologies.¹⁴

The essays in this book bring together a wide range of perspectives on the norm issue in modern Russian language culture. The cases presented are taken from different realms of linguistic practice, such as literary fiction, internet slang, literary criticism and aesthetics, writers' blogs, linguistic play, and from various arenas for "talk about talk," such as the classroom, blogs, the media, the courtroom, and so forth. Most importantly, the breadth and variation of material enable us to focus exactly on the *intersections* between linguistic authority and creative response, prescriptive regulations and concrete practices, explicit and implicit metalanguage. Furthermore, in combining various approaches and disciplines—linguistics, literary criticism, new media studies; theoretical expositions and concrete case studies—the book as a whole explores the multiplicity of meanings that are accorded to the notion of linguistic norms in the Russian community. This makes it possible to draw both a broad and a detailed picture of important trends in modern Russian language culture.

Henning Andersen's essay, "Living Norms," opens the book with a theoretical discussion about the nature of different kinds of norm. Andersen's particular focus is *living norms*. In contrast to the rigid, explicit prescriptive norms, imposed from above by centralized language authorities, the more fluid, *implicit living norms* are those that speakers collectively shape and reshape in the constant metadialogue they carry on whenever they speak. Whereas in the Russian linguistic tradition, *the norm* is often equated with *the norm of the standard language*, Andersen's article makes clear that norms operate on all levels of verbal interaction, a point that is nicely illustrated by the great variety of discourses and many different conceptions of norm that are analysed in the following articles.

Martin Paulsen's article, "Norm Negotiations in Russian Literary Criticism," supports the view that metalanguage should be seen not as something external to language itself, but rather as an integral component of language as it exists in society. Paulsen points out that the alternation

¹⁴ Cf. Martin Paulsen, 2009, *Hegemonic Language and Literature: Russian Metadiscourse on Language in the 1990s*, PhD thesis, University of Bergen, pp. 44–48.

between *implicit* and *explicit norm negotiation* is the normal condition in a language community, and goes on to study an example of *explicit norm negotiation* in post-Soviet literary life of the 1990s: the response to the language question by literary critics. In examining the main trends in the critics' discussions and relating them to the general language debate of the 1990s, Paulsen also argues that any kind of explicit norm negotiation is necessarily influenced by the linguistic performance it analyses, in this particular case, literary fiction.

A quite different example of explicit norm negotiation is found in Vera Zvereva's contribution, "Iazyk padonkaf?: Diskussii pol'zovatelei Runeta." Zvereva provides a fascinating account of the emergence of the peculiar style of internet slang known as *iazzyk padonkov*, and concentrates on the metalinguistic discussions among the users of this style. She traces the main topics, arguments and positions taken in the discussion and links them to popular perceptions of the *padonki* style. Particularly interesting are the various attitudes towards, and perceptions of, norms and standards, both within the *padonki* style, and in relation to the standard language.

The very interaction between *implicit* and *explicit norm negotiations* is explored in Elena Markasova's article, "Ia ne upotrebliaiu vvodnye slova..." (o sud'be vvodnykh konstruksii v russkom iazyke poslednego desiatiletiia)," which studies the grammatical category of parentheticals (*vvodnye slova/konstruksii*). Markasova juxtaposes explicit comments made by school children on the semantics and usage of various parentheticals in contemporary Russian with information on parentheticals derived from text corpora such as the Russian National Corpus. She finds that the children, in their highly subjective comments based on personal usage and experience, point out changes in the frequency of usage that are largely confirmed by the corpora data.

While implicit negotiation of norms takes place in the constant meta-dialogue on language we humans engage in whenever we speak, some forms of "implicit" linguistic statements are nevertheless more pronounced than others. Ellen Rutten's article, "Wrong Is the New Right. Or Is It? Linguistic Identity in Russian Writers' Weblogs," reveals how "performative" (implicit) and "straightforward" (explicit) metalanguage can differ substantially even when attributable to the same source. Rutten takes a closer look at writers' blogs, and the blog of Tat'iana Tolstaia in

particular. In comparing Tolstaia's metalinguistic statements about her own style of writing in her blog with her actual linguistic performance, Rutten also shows how deeply Tolstaia's established *literariness/literary style* and purist views on the language question are embedded in her writing practice and how they remain uninfluenced to any significant degree by the new medium of the blog.

Metalanguage as linguistic practice is explored in more detail in Ingunn Lunde's article, "Performative Metalanguage: Negotiating Norms Through Verbal Action." Having briefly sketched the history of *performative metalanguage* in Russian cultural practice, Lunde sets out to outline certain characteristics and tendencies that can be observed in this particular way of negotiating linguistic norms in Russia today. Referring to examples taken from word formation practices, from the genre of *Duponisms*, linguistic humour, and internet Russian, Lunde argues that such activity, and its reception, can contribute to a change in people's *perception of linguistic norms*, that is, such activity has the potential to influence current ideas about language, or current language ideologies.

A case study of *performative metalanguage* in literary fiction is offered by Tine Roesen in her contribution "The Old Man's New Language: Semantic Shifts and Linguistic Countermeasures in Aleksei Slapovskii's *Oni*." Centring her analysis on one of the main characters of Slapovskii's novel, M.M., and his efforts to oppose ideological language by creating his own, new idiom, Roesen reveals the complexities involved in any linguistic strategy intended to intervene in a living language culture. Subtly aware of the peculiarities involved in a fictional representation of a one-man project of linguistic cultivation, Roesen's analysis operates on two levels, on the one hand, by describing M.M.'s solutions to the problem he sees in his surrounding linguistic environment, and on the other, by analysing Slapovskii's representation of the same as a commentary on linguistic norm negotiation in Russia today.

The ways in which artistic means can be used to represent and negotiate not only linguistic, but also social norms, are scrutinized in Dirk Uffelmann's article, "The Compliance with and Imposition of Social and Linguistic Norms in Sorokin's *Norma* and *Den' oprichnika*." In this perspective, Uffelmann traces the evolution of Vladimir Sorokin's poetics from the early novel *Norma* to his recent *Den' oprichnika*, arguing for a certain continuity in the author's work between his conceptualist and

his post-conceptualist periods. Uffelmann shows that the attitudes towards norms are quite different in the two works; in *Norma* the norms are given and hardly questioned, whereas in *Den' oprichnika* they are being established.

Sorokin is also the topic of Karin Grelz's contribution, "When Non-Negotiation is the Norm: Sorokin's *Tridtsataia liubov' Mariny* and Tsvetaeva's *Krysolov*." Grelz offers a comparative reading of Sorokin's and Tsvetaeva's texts, showing that the former is to a significant degree modelled on the latter. The focus of Grelz's analysis is how the two authors use the clashes of values and the ongoing negotiations in the everyday, vernacular Russian of their time for their own artistic purposes. Both works, Grelz argues, can be interpreted as declarations of a non-negotiative standpoint where the aesthetic dimension is concerned, and as demonstrations of the artist's ability to escape the world of social and ideological conflict and value-laden social languages through the force of his or her own word.

The aesthetic and philosophical problems involved in the artist's representation of reality are at the centre of Peter Alberg Jensen's contribution, "Mir, kotoryi stal sam ne svoi' v estetike molodogo Pasternaka." Jensen's reading of Pasternak's early fragments reveals how the young poet radically opposes what he sees as the constraints of the norm, where "the norm" seems to be equated with language, or linguistic practice, as such. Pasternak sees true artistic representation only where the norm is absent, irrelevant, or "out of place," and where any "normal" relationship between the thing and the word has been suspended. Pasternak's radical denial of "the norm as such" is illuminating both for the understanding of the poet's conception of (conventional) language (norms) and as a contrast to the historically defined norm, which is the target of most post-Soviet norm-breaking.

The post-revolutionary years saw active and creative norm-breaking on many levels, as suggested by the metaphor "Landslide of the Norm," which, as already mentioned, first appeared in an article by Roman Jakobson. Heinrich Kirschbaum traces the history of this ambivalent image in the writings of the Formalists and their critics, with particular focus on Tynianov and Jakobson. He reveals how Tynianov's original image, used with reference to the prose of Pil'niak, is broadened in Jakobson's exposition to include wider cultural processes, and points to

the image's shifting semantics, reference points and accompanying conceptions of *norm*.

Tynianov's literary criticism is also the point of departure for Susanna Witt's contribution, "Pasternak's *Iskazhenie* and the Practice of Creative Evolution." Witt studies Pasternak's poetics of *iskazhenie* (distortion) as a response to Tynianov's definition of Pasternak's artistic "mission": to use the nineteenth century as "material" for his own literary work. In this perspective, Witt analyses Pasternak's creative use of a Tiutchev poem in *Doktor Zhivago*. Of particular interest is the concept of *norm* (which, in the context of Tynianov, refers to the attitude towards the cultural heritage, the nineteenth-century "material") and its status in Pasternak's aesthetics and literary practice, where *deviations from norms* are generally linked to notions of creativity, originality, and art as such.

Originality, creativity and linguistic play are also at the centre of Boris Norman's contribution, "Sdvig v znachenii, osnovannyi na formal'nom skhodstve slov." Norman notes the growing tendency in contemporary slang and informal speech to play with semantic shifts based on a formal similarity between words. In this sense, Russian computer slang can in many instances be seen as a creative response to Anglo-American influence. The semanticization of form can also be seen in the often playful attitudes of the language of advertising and shows us yet another instance of *linguistic performance* that includes a statement about language.

A highly practical and pragmatic kind of norm negotiation is discussed in Daniel Weiss's article "Sudebnaia ekspertiza i vklad lingvisty v interpretatsiiu zakona." Weiss shows how commonly accepted norms of interpretation are challenged in legal processes, and investigates cases where linguistic expertise is needed in order to clarify the meaning of both concrete utterances and of the language of law. He looks in greater detail at the legal treatment of three different types of implicit information: the absence of modal markers, presuppositions, and conversational implicatures, and argues that when it comes to "verbal crimes," judicial practice would do well to engage the expertise of linguists more often.

In a more general context, we can question whether professional linguists really are better equipped to interpret and understand language than "ordinary people." In fact, the problem of professional vs. lay linguistic participation in norm negotiation and "talk about talk" has been

a topic of debate in theoretical writings on metalanguage.¹⁵ In Gasan Guseinov's contribution, "Instrumenty opisaniia nepolnoi kommunikatsii v blogosfere," we see both camps in action, as Guseinov analyses a new term of his own invention, *liturativ*, and the reactions to it from, among others, the users of the device it is meant to describe. The *liturativ* is a style of norm-breaking that comes across as a multilayered message: a strikethrough of (often non-normative) words, or parts of a sentence, with the "erased text" still visible. Guseinov argues for treating *liturativy* and *errativy* (deliberate wrong spellings typical of Russian internet language) as rhetorical devices of norm negotiation stimulated not least by the conditions of the new media.

The two last contributions broaden the topic of norm negotiation out into the wider media and new media discourse. Lara Ryazanova-Clarke traces the semantic evolution of a particular word that has gained a highly symbolic value during the years of Putin's presidency, the "vertical" ("vertical of power" etc.). Contrasting the uses of "vertical" in the authoritative, official discourse with its use in one of the counter-discourses, Viktor Shenderovich's popular radio show "The Melted Cheese," Ryazanova-Clarke analyses how the latter reacts to the normative use of the term in a process of ideological norm negotiation and alternative meaning construction.

Michael S. Gorham's article "We Speak Russian! New Models of Norm Negotiation in the Electronic Media," looks at the shape and impact of norm negotiation and folk linguistics in the age of mass and new media, focusing on the popular show "Govorim po-russki!" (radio broadcast, blog, interactive internet *aktsii* and more). Gorham distinguishes between two types of norm negotiation: "authoritative," that is, "top-down" metalinguistic practices aimed at establishing rules, laws, or guidelines about proper and improper usage, and "democratic," that is, interactive discussion and debate between hosts and listeners or readers. Analysing in more detail some central topics on the programme's agenda, Gorham shows how the hosts' attitudes towards the language question have grown more dynamic over the years, reflecting a more pragmatic and playful attitude to the question of linguistic first-aid and cultivation.

15 See above, and, e.g., Deborah Cameron, 2004, "Out of the Bottle: The Social Life of Metalanguage," *Metalanguage: Social and Ideological Perspectives*, eds. A. Jaworski et al., Berlin & New York, pp. 311–21.

A more dynamic, practical-pragmatic, and even relaxed or playful attitude towards norms and linguistic standards can in fact be noticed in several domains of contemporary Russian language culture. At the same time, this growing “normalization” is constantly challenged by fierce debates on new proposals from linguistic authorities, whether conservative or progressive. A recent example includes the furious debates that flared up in early September 2009 all over the Russian internet in response to the official sanctioning of certain “new” forms as acceptable variants of Standard Russian (for instance *kofe* as a neuter noun, a couple of instances of alternative stress, and similar). Such reactions indicate that the long tradition of *kul'tura rechi* and a centralized language policy still have some bearing on common linguistic attitudes, habits, and modes of thought. At the same time, they show us a linguistic community acutely sensitive to linguistic change and highly concerned about the language question as such. This, together with the wonderful examples of linguistic creativity explored in several of the essays in this book, makes Russian language culture, its history, development and future, an exiting object of study, and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Acknowledgements

This book has been produced with generous financial support from the Research Council of Norway and the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Bergen. We wish to thank the Research Council of Norway for funding the international research project “Landslide of the Norm: Linguistic liberalization and literary development in Russia in the 1920s and 1990s” (2005–2008). The articles gathered in the present volume are revised versions of papers presented at this project’s fifth and final conference, held 16–20 September 2008 in Bergen, Norway. We are grateful to Peter Cripps and Igor Zhevagin, whose ample suggestions have greatly improved the stylistic level of the English and Russian articles respectively. Our thanks also to Kyrill Dissanayake for carefully checking and improving translations from Russian into English. Finally, we wish to thank all the members of the *Landslide* research group for their time and energy, and for making every *Landslide* conference an inspiring arena for scholarly interaction.