



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

- This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.
- A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.
- This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.
- The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.
- When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

**Styling identities in post-Soviet cinema: the use of slang, argot and  
obscenities in contemporary Russian films**

**Varvara A Christie**

**Ph.D. Thesis**

**The University of Edinburgh**

**2013**

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Varvara A Christie

Edinburgh, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2013

## **Abstract**

Traditional Soviet conceptualisation of slang, argot and obscenities as ‘substandard’ is argued to have strong ideological underpinnings. Despite such lexis gaining increased visibility in public speech starting from Perestroika times, sociolinguistic research into their use is still scarce and often tainted by the same judgemental approach. Rejecting the association of slang, argot and obscenities with speakers’ insufficient linguistic competency, this study shifts attention to their identity construction values. Drawing largely on constructionist sociolinguistics, this thesis examines the use of slang, argot and obscenities in the scripts of six post-Soviet Russian films released in the period 1993-2005. It investigates how indexical connections between language and society were exploited, negotiated and, at times, reinterpreted in the films.

Lexical variation is conceived here as a stylistic resource, and its functions in cinematic discourse are analysed in terms of statics (engagement with stereotypes) and dynamics (identity work) of characterisation. With regards to the former, the focused and economic conditions of film production determine that stereotypes are often drawn on to provide quick identification, especially in construction of minor characters. Stereotypes of criminals, youth and uneducated male adults were analysed, revealing that cinema does not only exploit direct associations between lexical varieties and social groups, but also engages with such stereotypes agentively, bringing to viewers’ attention their arbitrary nature and rigidity of boundaries, established by social categories.

Language variation can also represent dynamics of characters’ identity work, which was analysed on two levels – interpersonal and ideational. The analysis revealed a multitude of functions, which on the interpersonal level drew on associations with familiarity, power and catharsis, yet defying stable connections between lexical varieties and structural elements. On the ideational level slang, argot and obscenities were shown to render characters’ orientation towards social structure and discourses, prevalent in the contemporary Russian society.

This thesis thus shows that slang, argot and obscenities are a versatile meaning-making resource, employed in cinematic discourse for a variety of purposes. Focusing on the way character identities are styled through the use of lexical variation enabled this project to account for both the local instances of identity construction and the macro-level attempts of the filmmakers to critically engage with the social structures, exploring, questioning and reinterpreting them.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my primary supervisor, Dr Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, for encouraging me to pursue the path of PhD research and for all her guidance along the way. I would also like to thank my secondary supervisor, Dr Charlotte Bosseaux, for her feedback and support.

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous financial support provided to me by the Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies (CRCEES), which enabled me to fund my way through these years, as well as benefit from the three CRCEES Forums, and several International conferences which I have been privileged to participate in.

I am also grateful to all those scholars who have given me feedback at various stages. My sincere gratitude goes to (in no particular order) Dr John Dunn, Dr Michael Gorham, Dr Martin Paulsen, Dr Dirk Uffelman, Dr Susanna Witt, Dr Luc van Doorslaer, Dr Davide Messina and many others.

Last, but not least I would like to thank all those people who inspired me to undertake a PhD (especially my brother, Dr Stepan Boitsov), who stood by me throughout the years and who helped me through those most painful last stages. I thank my academic friends for their invaluable feedback, for their constructive criticism and for believing in me: Dr Gesine Strenge, Emily Ross, Nariman Youssef, Elena Sanz Ortega, Lisa Möckli, Cristina Olivari, Mara Götz, Dr Christopher Ferguson. I thank my non-academic friends for providing that well-needed space to go back to the good old non-academic me: Ania, Masha, Nina, Kat, Ksiusha, Yana, Zoia, Dasha, Julia. I thank my family, who are stretched over four countries: Russia, Scotland, Norway and Denmark, and yet manage to provide me with that precious 'comfort-zone'. Finally, I thank my son Nicol and my kæreste Kristoffer for being what they are - a great laugh always! This thesis is for you, boys.

## **Symbols and Abbreviations**

The films analysed in this thesis are referred to by the following abbreviations:

B – Брат (Brother)

DCM – Мама не горюй! (Don't Cry Mommy!)

I – Итальянец (The Italian)

PNH – Особенности Национальной Охоты (Peculiarities of the National Hunt)

SM – Ширли-Мырли (Shirli-Myrli)

WP – Окно в Париж (Window to Paris)

\* (asterix) marks an item, translation of which is included in Appendix 2

## Table of contents

DECLARATION .....	2
ABSTRACT .....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	4
SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	5
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	6
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>9</b>
NON-STANDARD LANGUAGE AS AN IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT .....	10
SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS AS A METHOD FOR ANALYSING NON-STANDARD LANGUAGE.....	13
IDENTITY PERFORMANCE.....	15
FILM DISCOURSE AS THE OBJECT OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC ENQUIRY .....	17
RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	18
OUTLINE.....	19
<b>CHAPTER 1. APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF NON-STANDARD LANGUAGE VARIETIES.....</b>	<b>22</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	22
SECTION 1. THE IDEOLOGY OF STANDARDISATION AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF LANGUAGE	
STANDARD WITHIN SOVIET LINGUISTICS.....	22
1.1. Literary language and the superiority of written forms of language.....	23
1.2. Literary language as an unobtainable ideal.....	25
1.3. Causes and consequences of standardisation.....	26
1.4. Perspectives on non-standard language varieties.....	28
SECTION 2. SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACHES TO RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE VARIATION.....	36
2.1. Early approaches: Labov and the equality of studied variants.....	36
2.2. Giles and Bell: the turn towards the speaker .....	39
2.3. Coupland's theory of style .....	41
SECTION 3. THE USE OF NON-STANDARD LANGUAGE IN THE PUBLIC MEDIA OF POST-SOVIET RUSSIA	
.....	46
3.1. Landslide of the norm: the processes of language change in post-Soviet Russia.....	47
3.2. Non-standard language varieties in post-Soviet Russia.....	51
3.2.1. Criminal argot .....	52
3.2.2. Youth slang .....	54
3.2.3. Obscenities.....	57
CONCLUSION .....	60
<b>CHAPTER 2. SOCIOLINGUISTIC METHOD IN THE STUDY OF FILM DIALOGUE.....</b>	<b>63</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	63
SECTION 1. FILM DIALOGUE.....	65
SECTION 2. SOCIOLINGUISTIC TOOLKIT FOR THE ANALYSIS OF FILM DISCOURSE .....	71
2.1. Social identity through the prism of linguistic performance.....	71
2.2. Enacting social differences .....	74
2.3. Framing interpersonal relations .....	76
SECTION 3. STUDY DESIGN .....	79
<b>CHAPTER 3. POST-SOVIET CINEMA: 1991 – 2005.....</b>	<b>83</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	83
SECTION 1. ‘THE STATE OF THE NATIONAL CINEMA’ IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA .....	84
1.1. Developments in the 1980s.....	84

1.2. Film production under the socio-political and economic conditions of the 1990s .....	85
1.3. The issue of national identity in the cinema of the 1990s.....	87
SECTION 2. DATA SELECTION AND SYNOPSES .....	89
2.1. Data selection .....	89
2.2. Synopses .....	93
2.2.1. Window to Paris.....	93
2.2.2. Peculiarities of the National Hunt .....	94
2.2.3. Shirli-Myrli .....	95
2.2.4. Brother .....	96
2.2.5. Don't Cry Mommy! .....	97
2.2.6. The Italian .....	98
CONCLUSION .....	100
<b>CHAPTER 4. THE STATICS OF CHARACTERISATION: SOCIAL STEREOTYPES.....</b>	<b>101</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	101
SECTION 1. SOCIAL STEREOTYPES IN CINEMA.....	103
SECTION 2. YOUNGSTERS, GANGSTERS AND PLEBSTERS .....	106
2.1. Youth slang.....	108
2.2. Criminal argot.....	112
2.3. Obscenities .....	115
SECTION 3. RUSSIAN SELF-STEREOTYPING .....	121
CONCLUSION .....	128
<b>CHAPTER 5. THE DYNAMICS OF CHARACTERISATION: IDENTITY WORK .....</b>	<b>130</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	130
SECTION 1. ON-SCREEN IDENTITY WORK .....	132
SECTION 2. INTERPERSONAL LEVEL .....	135
2.1. Peer groups .....	136
2.1.1. Non-convergence .....	138
2.1.2. Shift from non-standard into standard .....	142
2.1.3. Common use of non-standard.....	144
2.1.4. Shift from standard into non-standard .....	150
2.2. Hierarchical relations.....	163
2.2.1. Non-convergence .....	165
2.2.2. Shift from non-standard into standard .....	170
2.2.3. Common use of non-standard.....	172
2.2.4. Shift from standard into non-standard .....	177
SECTION 3. IDEATIONAL LEVEL .....	185
3.1. Expressive function .....	186
3.2. Performative function .....	189
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION .....	200
<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>204</b>
ON THE IDEOLOGY OF STANDARDISATION .....	205
ON IDENTITY STYLING .....	206
ON FILM DISCOURSE AS THE OBJECT OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC ENQUIRY .....	207
ON LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY IN CINEMATIC DISCOURSE.....	208
LIMITATION OF THIS STUDY AND PERSPECTIVES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	210
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>FILMOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MINOR CHARACTERS (CHAPTER 4) .....</b>	<b>224</b>

<b>APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY OF COMMON NON-STANDARD LEXICAL ITEMS</b> <b>(CHAPTERS 4 &amp; 5).....</b>	<b>226</b>
--	------------

## Introduction

This thesis grew out of my MSc dissertation, which was dedicated to the translation of non-standard lexis in the film *Брат* (*Brother*). Although based firmly within the field of Translation Studies, research undertaken for the dissertation made me return again and again to three questions, which were only marginally linked to issues concerning Translation Studies proper: What is non-standard language? How to identify its functions? How can I justify linguistic focus in a study that deals with a multimodal medium of film? With harsh time and space limits imposed on the Master's dissertation research, I felt I did not have enough time to give these issues due consideration, and they were only mentioned in passing insofar as they were relevant to my case-study. I was then privileged to be awarded funding to conduct PhD research within the framework of CRCEES (Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies), which, I believed, would be a great opportunity to delve deeper into these issues. The more I researched into the topic, though, the larger these issues would become. Eventually, I had to make the (rather painful) decision to drop the Translation component, originally envisaged as part of this PhD project, in order to bring out the monolingual aspect more prominently. The three concerns, identified previously, then fell into place, pointing to the central importance of the concept of identity. By bringing identity construction to the fore, I was able to formulate an approach to the study of non-standard language that takes into consideration the socio-cultural context of its use, as well as the specificity of the medium in which it appears. Adopting the method drawn from constructionist sociolinguistics, this thesis examines the use of non-standard language to style character identities by analysing occurrences of slang, argot and obscenities in the dialogues of six post-Soviet Russian films.

In the remaining part of this introduction I would like to address the three original questions in more detail. Although none of them can be answered univocally, overview of the relevant body of work determines the conjunction at which the current thesis is located, and, through this, the perspective proposed by the adopted approach. As the concept of identity takes centre stage, it also needs to be overviewed here. In the final part of the introduction, a chapter by chapter outline of the thesis will be provided.

## **Non-standard language as an ideological construct**

First of all, it is necessary to consider the conceptualisation of non-standard language and establish the position taken up in the following study. At first glance straightforward and unambiguous, the concept of non-standard language does not seem to require anything other than the apt definition provided by the *Dictionary of Sociolinguistics*: ‘Non-standard language refers to elements of language that are not considered standard (i.e. appropriate in formal speech and writing)’ (Swann et al. 2004: 223). Such wording, however, suggests that a further definition of standard is in order. And this is where the initial transparency starts to blur. This section provides the background for the following discussion of the conceptualisation of non-standard language in the Russian milieu (Chapter 1 (1)), explains why a more critical approach is argued for, and why a shift of focus from the more traditional orientation of Russian sociolinguistic research is proposed.

Current linguistic research owes the problematisation of the concept of language standard to Milroy & Milroy who were among the first to question its ‘obvious’ nature (e.g. 1985). In their work they placed the concept under careful scrutiny, uncovering its ideological nature that stands in opposition to the inherent variability of language. They consequently define ‘standard language as an idea in the mind rather than a reality – a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent’ (1985: 23). They also suggest seeing ‘standardisation as a historical process which – to a greater or lesser degree – is always in progress in those languages that undergo it’ (1985: 22). Intensification of this process is often caused by political turbulence within the nation when the struggle for control also involves language matters, giving rise to purism as a kind of a language policy (Schiffman 1996: 62). In Schiffman's words, the resulting “‘fixedness” is itself a kind of myth that crops up in puristic movements; the idea is that language was “‘fixed” once and for all in the past, and cannot be changed now by mere mortals’ (ibid: 71). This link between political needs and enhancement of language standardisation is also elaborated upon in Bourdieu's most influential work (1991). Bourdieu suggests that establishment and codification of a standard language coincides with the period of nation building and the constructed standard (or normalized) language hence becomes ‘impersonal and anonymous like the official uses it has to serve’ and as such ‘it concurs with the demands of bureaucratic predictability and calculability’ (1991: 48). Although Bourdieu based his discussion primarily on the rise of the French standard language, further studies of language policy negotiations, including one by Gorham (2003) focusing on the formative years of the Soviet state, show the relevance of Bourdieu's conclusions for the wider theoretical applications.

Milroy and Milroy's work on causes, process and consequences of language standardisation (1985), Bourdieu's work on symbolic power attributed to certain languages (1991) and Schiffman's work on linguistic culture (1996) all address the question of the role of ideology in linguistic policies. Similar issues have been raised in the works of Harris (1981), Joseph (1987), Taylor & Joseph (1990), among others, creating a body of work seeking to complicate the once seemingly transparent and tangible notion of standard languages. This critical perspective on language standards, albeit gaining conceptual prominence among contemporary Western (socio)linguists is, curiously enough, practically absent from the Soviet/Russian spectrum of linguistic discussions. The tangible nature of standard (or literary) language described within Vinogradov's school of Soviet linguistics (to be discussed in more details in Chapter 1 (1)) is akin to a traditional approach represented in many academic works belonging to 'standard-language cultures' (Milroy 1999: 18). Positioning such an approach as 'obvious' and 'commonsensical', its proponents have thus constructed an ideological myth around the notion of 'standard'. The diachronic perspective on the creation of lineage needed to provide ideological grounds for propagation of 'standard' English is revealed by research undertaken by Crowley (1991) and Milroy (e.g. 1999). Their work shows how the ideology of 'standard' English has been constructed in the course of the past few centuries and used as an instrument of power, by which 'a language is not seen as the possession of the communities that use it but as the property of small elite groups who have a moral duty to pronounce on language behaviour much as they might pronounce on moral behaviour' (Milroy 1999: 21). Bourdieu also accounts for the existing antagonism between language guardians (teachers, grammarians, writers) and the common people who can only access the standard language through extensive education and careful use. 'The development of consciousness among speakers of a "correct", or canonical, form of language' (Milroy 2001: 535) that everyone should strive for, is the immediate effect of the ongoing process of standardisation (Milroy & Milroy 1997). Standardisation in itself is a process aimed at imposing uniformity on the structural parts of language, which results in the construction of a language variety with the highest attributed linguistic value. Ironically, historical analysis of the way 'standard' English has been presented in the writings of its proponents shows evidence that undermines its most basic characteristic traits – those of its uniformity and stability. Crowley shows that not only the standards of 'proper English' usage show considerable change over time, but also 'what counts as "proper English" society or "way of life", is also historically shifting, mobile and indeterminate' (1991: 10), thus rendering moralistic pronouncements that equate certain linguistic varieties with moral values (or lack of them), as highly ideologically-charged.

Milroy (1999) further suggests that working from within the context of 'standard language cultures' has shaped linguistic approaches taken up by scholars, who set the standard variety as 'the point of reference and database of theory' (Milroy 1999: 26). This, he argues, contributes to the legitimacy of the standard variety and furthers its ideological strength. There can hence be said to be two distinctly opposed approaches to the conceptualisation of language standard in contemporary (socio)linguistics – Standard as the optimal realisation of the language system's potential, and 'standard' as the ideological construct used to secure power.<sup>1</sup> These two approaches are not strictly delimited, since traditional views that attribute the qualities of a tangible linguistic phenomenon to standard languages can serve well in certain areas, and yet outside the realm of practical application (e.g. pedagogy and EFL), standard languages cannot be regarded uncritically and uniformly.

Adopting a critical distance from the notion of standard language would imply regarding the antagonistic notion of non-standard language in a similar manner. I would therefore suggest approaching non-standard language equally as the result of language standardisation, since it is through the process of standardisation that the view of certain language varieties as non-standard is propagated. Being an idea cultivated in a nation's mind, it is prone to change and to fuzziness around the edges, and therefore does not constitute a strictly delimited body of language. Although with regards to a highly standardised language like Russian it is tempting to consider non-standard as elements of language that do not comply with the codified norms of language use, it is extremely important to keep in sight the continuous process of change that affects both prescriptive writing (e.g. the change of codified norms) and social attitudes (e.g. prestige value attached to certain language varieties, whether standard or not).

Conceived of as social constructs, laden with ideological overtones, non-standard language varieties are argued here to require a method of enquiry sensitive to the socio-cultural context in which their use is embedded. Examining the dominant approaches to the research of such lexical varieties as slang, argot and obscenities in the Russian milieu from the

---

<sup>1</sup> The difference in the orthographic realisation of the word standard in the works of Anglo-American scholars often provides a glimpse on the ideological stance of the author. Capitalization is frequent in the works that take on traditional approach and posit this language variety to represent indisputable point of reference, while the scholars working to deconstruct the ideological underpinnings of this approach feel the need to put uneasy disclaimers regarding their use of the term which is often put in inverted commas (e.g. Milroy 1999: 32; Coupland 2007: 42).

perspective of the critical approach introduced above, Chapter 1 (3) points to their limitations. Conditions of dramatic language change, characteristic of the early post-Soviet period, which resulted in the increase of visibility of non-standard language varieties in the public media, call for a move away from the judgemental approaches typical of Soviet and, later, Russian linguistics. Shifting the focus onto the functions of the use of non-standard language, this thesis proposes to adopt (Western) sociolinguistic methods. An overview of how these methods can help to identify the functions of non-standard language varieties is given in the following section.

## **Sociolinguistic analysis as a method for analysing non-standard language**

Sociolinguistic theories that followed from Labov's groundbreaking research on language variation in the 1960s concerned themselves in a variety of ways with interconnections between the user and the use of language. Chapter 1 (2) will expand on Labov's findings with regards to inter-speaker variation, as well as the developments in these theories over the past few decades, outlining major approaches to research on language variation and drawing attention to the gradual shift of focus towards the speaker. Already in the beginning of the 1970s, Giles introduced his Speech Accommodation Theory (1973). Applying insights from social psychology, it attempted to shed light on the motivations behind shifts in speech styles that happen during social encounters, linking them to the speakers' orientation towards their interlocutors. The links between speech styles and the audience were further developed by Bell (1984), who proposed to differentiate between different types of audience, who influence speaker behaviour to varied degrees. These two approaches devised productive methods for sociolinguistic enquiry into intra-speaker variation, foregrounding the dynamic nature of speech styling that defies stable connections between social groups and speech styles.

Another important perspective was provided by Halliday's research into the phenomenon of antilanguages. Since for him 'the meaning of a particular choice in a particular instance is a function of the whole complex of environmental factors, factors which when taken together define any exchange of meanings as being at some level a realization of the social system' (Halliday 1978: 156), he suggested looking at antilanguages as the realisation of the social structure of anti-society, which is in its essence, a metaphor for society (Halliday 1978: 175). It hence creates the continuum on which various social dialects can be placed. He also points

out, in line with the preceding discussion, that 'popular usage opposes *dialect*, as “anti-”, to (*standard*) *language*, as the established norm' (1978: 178-9). He follows on to create a link between the position of a language variety on the standard → non-standard continuum and the communicative purposes and circumstances of a speech event by saying that 'a nonstandard dialect that is consciously used for strategic purposes, defensively to maintain a particular social reality or offensively for resistance and protest, lies further in the direction of an antilanguage' (ibid). Two points can be derived from Halliday's study: Firstly, his findings defy the possibility of making a clear-cut distinction between standard and non-standard language, but instead suggest to conceive of various language varieties as positioned on a continuum. Secondly, the importance of social context is presented as paramount, as it defines the exact meaning of an utterance.

The latter point, brought to attention by Halliday, has been centralised in more recent sociolinguistic theories, which focus on the baggage of social associations that underlie the use of specific language varieties and thus form their structural component. Conceiving of the indexical values of non-standard varieties as a 'communicative resource', Coupland proposed to consider speech styling not as a reaction (e.g. to an addressee), but as an agentive choice of the speaker (cf. 2007). This is an important point for research into the functions of language variation and as such it is taken up in the current study, which builds on Coupland's call to consider non-standard language varieties as giving creative freedom to language users, who can pick-and-drop them in speech when association to this or that identity is needed.

The interplay between the dimensions of structure and agency has become the centre of attention for constructionist sociolinguists. Assuming, on the one hand, the presence of semiotic significance in linguistic form, and that it is imbued and moulded by the multitude of past usages, such approaches, on the other hand, posit the intentional application and manipulation of those meanings in speakers' performance (Bell and Gibson 2011: 560). This dual focus allows due consideration to be given to the socio-cultural context without disregarding the agentive powers of speakers in their linguistic behaviour. Before the implications of such an approach to language variation for the study of film dialogues can be considered, the concept of speaker identity has to be introduced. Outlining its conceptualisation as including both structured and agentive dimensions (cf.: ibid: 561), I argue for its place at the core of the current study.

## Identity performance

Social constructionist understanding of identity draws on the insights presented in Goffman's work on identity performance (1959). In this study, Goffman explores similarities between the performance of identity and theatrical performance, suggesting that performance of one's identity cannot be reduced to the verbal component alone – he highlights that it is reliant on teams (groups of people that cooperate in order to perform a shared identity), the use of carefully selected regions (places where performances take place) and expressive coherence, just as cast, settings and continuity are deemed important constituents of staging in the theatre / cinema. And yet language *is* the major vehicle for identity construction, and this is the aspect that becomes central for the social constructionist perspective on identity. Unlike the variationists, who attempted to establish fixed links between the social status of speakers and the language variant they were most likely to employ, social constructionists show how language variation is used as a meaning-making tool. This conception of linguistic performance fits well into the performative framework suggested by Goffman, for whom the performance of real-life identities is akin to characterisation in that the 'performers' in either case do not reveal at random various traits that belong to the pre-existing core entity, but engage in the deliberate and skilful task of presenting the 'audience' with an idealized view of the situation (Goffman 1959 :44).

The firm belief that identities are not preceded by some set of pre-given internal qualities, but are constructed and potentially renegotiated in the course of interaction is one of the most defining characteristics of the performative theories. Goffman, therefore, talks of 'the self as a performed character' (1959: 245) and Butler sees identity as 'the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a 'natural' kind of being' (1990: 33). Identity, then, is seen not as a solid and tangible entity but as a fluid construct born and kept alive during the process of interaction with others ('the audience'), for and through who identities exist.

The linguistic aspect of identity performance was explored by Butler through the Austinian concepts of the performative, which regard utterances as 'doing' entities that are to be studied as 'the total speech-act in the total speech-situation' (Austin 1975: 148). According to Austin, the two ways in which the utterances can act are illocutionary and perlocutionary. Illocutionary force of an utterance relates to the kind of act that is being accomplished *in* saying these words. Perlocutionary dimension relates to the effect produced *by* issuing an utterance. For an utterance to have performative force, according to Austin, the speech situation should fulfil a number of felicity conditions and the failure to do so will result in

misfire, abuse or mistake. Of special importance for the concept of the felicity of the performative force of an utterance is its reliance on convention or ritual, without which the utterance can only be regarded as a 'hollow' performative. This dependence of the performative on existing rituals is explored further in Butler's 1997 work on excitable speech, in which she uses the Austinian concept of performativity and its later reworking by Derrida to study the illocutionary force of e.g. hate speech as it is conceived of by legal scholars. She concludes that for an utterance to have illocutionary force within the context of the legal system it requires an adjudication of the law and prior to that it can only be considered perlocutionary. This links the performative force of an utterance (potentially, punishable 'doing') to the context of speech situation (in this case, legal), the interpretation of which will depend on the reading of encoded cultural signs (what in this cultural context is regarded as particularly traumatic and hence harmful). It means then that 'a performative "works" to the extent that *it draws on and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized'. (Butler 1997: 51). Butler names this aspect of performative force *historicity* and defines it as 'the history which has become internal to a name, has come to constitute the contemporary meaning of a name: the sedimentation of its usages as they have become part of the very name, a sedimentation, a repetition that congeals, that gives the name its force' (1997: 36).

The concept of *historicity* helps to account for the structural elements of identity performance, putting each new usage into historical perspective, while at the same time emphasising its uniqueness, and, therefore, agency. Conceiving of identity as 'in part product, the result of the social milieu, chances and strictures, which an individual has experienced [...] in part process, something negotiated and constructed rather than just being there,' Bell and Gibson (2011: 561) reverse the focus once again, drawing attention to the fact that linguistic realisation of performance has 'something centrally to do with identities' (ibid). Having thus outlined the main tenets of the social constructionist view on identity performance, as well as the relevance of the concept of identity for the study of staged performance, I am now able to address the last strand of my research. In the following section, I will establish the approach taken up by this thesis to the study of film as text, and explain how sociolinguistic method can be productively applied to the selected data material.

## **Film discourse as the object of sociolinguistic enquiry**

Film is a multimodal medium, in which meanings are constructed through interplay between visual and verbal components, enhanced by music, special digital effects, etc. Language, then, is just one of the many tools available to the filmmaker, and as such it was for a long time backgrounded by film scholars. Marking a change, the last decade has seen the appearance of a growing body of work focusing on the use of language in film discourse (e.g. Kozloff 2000, Queen 2004, Bubel 2008, Richardson 2010, Dynel 2011, Androutsopoulos 2012, etc), which this thesis draws upon and joins.

The reasons for the rise in interest in linguistic research in film discourse are threefold. Firstly, for many decades Film Studies scholarship has been preoccupied with the techniques unique to the medium of cinema (e.g. montage) at the expense of the linguistic component, resulting in a gap in knowledge with regards to its functions and modes of impact on the audience. Secondly, the recent proliferation of interdisciplinarity enabled scholars from different disciplines to cross the boundaries that had formerly separated different fields of knowledge. In sociolinguistics, this has led to wider application of its methods to the data material that goes far beyond the traditional focus on spontaneous speech, so that sociolinguistic analysis of film dialogue no longer feels like anathema. Finally, the concern of constructionist sociolinguists with the agentive performance of identity allowed for the applicability of the methods thus devised to the third-party construction of identities (e.g. character identities in film). Such developments enabled the application of sociolinguistic methods to the study of film dialogues, allowing for attention to be paid to the similarities and differences between spontaneous and constructed dialogues.

The use of sociolinguistic methods seems especially appropriate with regards to the post-Soviet Russian films, which were largely concerned with the issue of identity construction and negotiation (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). Filmed in the years when censorship had very recently been abolished, leading to large volumes of what had previously been called ‘substandard’ language suddenly entering the language of public media, many of these films made extensive use of socially marked language varieties. They thus provide valuable material for research, which is useful for wider exploration of the linguistic means of character identity construction, while also allowing for more focused examination of a specific socio-historical context of language use in a specific cultural milieu.

Films are thus considered to be embedded in a specific socio-cultural situation, which determines the linguistic tools that are available to a filmmaker for the construction of

character identities. At the junction of structure and agency, universal identity construction techniques and local contexts, this thesis is trying to identify how ‘sociolinguistic difference’ (Androutopoulos 2012) was used by post-Soviet filmmakers to portray, reflect upon and challenge the view of contemporary society.

## Research questions

Exploration of the theoretical and methodological concerns outlined above, as well as the overall goal of putting this research into the context of socio-cultural developments of the early post-Soviet period in Russia, led to the formulation of the following research questions:

- How were slang, argot and obscenities used to construct character identities in the dialogues of the six selected post-Soviet films?
- How did filmmakers engage with the social stereotypes conventionally associated with the use of slang, argot, obscenities?
- How did instances of inter- and intra-speaker variation construct interpersonal relations?
- What aspects of the post-Soviet social reality were critically engaged with in the local instances of identity performance?

As can be seen from these questions, this thesis posits the agentive role of filmmakers, whose choice of language is taken to reflect both the local needs of narrative construction, and the critical stance encoded in the film as a message. Ambitious as it may seem, this perspective is very timely. When this project was already drawing to a close, two very important publications came out. November 2011 saw publication of a special issue of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, dedicated to the sociolinguistics of performance. In May 2012 a special issue of *Multilingua* presented a collection of articles concerning the sociolinguistics of cinematic discourse. These publications drew attention to relatively new fields of enquiry for sociolinguistic research, striving to shed light on the interconnections between language and society from yet another perspective. I therefore find it an exciting time to be completing my thesis, which has been conceived as such a study from its very beginning, and which has grown to bear on many of the same tenets, as advocated by the abovementioned journals. As such, I see the major contributions of this thesis as threefold: bringing in a critical perspective on the use of non-standard language varieties in the Russian milieu; providing an insight into the way filmmakers’ agentive use of language bears on the structural elements of

the socio-cultural context; and devising a methodology for sociolinguistic analysis of film dialogues with regards to their interpersonal and ideational dimensions.

## **Outline**

Chapter 1 provides theoretical discussion of the development of conceptual approaches to the study of standard and non-standard language varieties within Soviet and Russian linguistics, and contrasts it to the development of the Western sociolinguistic thought. Chapter 2 focuses on the strands of sociolinguistic method that are applicable to the study of film discourse, outlining the main concepts and approaches employed in the following analysis. Chapter 3 provides the necessary background information on the state of the Russian cinema in the early post-Soviet period, and introduces the data. Chapters 4 and 5 present the results of the analysis. The following outline gives more details on each chapter.

Chapter 1 discusses conceptual approaches to non-standard language, and introduces the sociolinguistic theories and concepts that will be drawn upon in the following study. Starting from the early Soviet period, it traces the development of the conceptualisation of language standard, pointing to its ideological underpinnings, which construct Russia as a 'standard-language culture' (Milroy 1999). It then brings to attention the conceptualisation of non-standard language, its relative position to the standard language, and the role of censorship control over the public media. Focus is then shifted to the difference in approaches to research on non-standard language between traditional Soviet linguistics (still prevalent in the Russian milieu) and Western sociolinguistics. In this section I outline some of the concepts pivotal to the following study and introduce the social constructionist approach to the study of language variation. In the last section of this chapter, I return to the case of Russian language, and discuss the recent changes to the previously rigid and highly codified language hierarchy. Collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s has caused social turbulence and this has naturally found reflection in language. I discuss what was advanced as explanation for these changes, and how these processes of change resulted in the rapid increase in the public use of non-standard language varieties, such as youth slang, criminal argot and obscenities. I finish by giving a socio-cultural profile for each of them.

Chapter 2 presents the method that is proposed for the analysis of the use of non-standard language varieties in film discourse. It opens with an overview of literature on the functions of film dialogue. Although application of linguistic methods of research to the language of films is still scarce, the insights provided by this body of work reveal the benefits of such

methods and point to the need for further sociolinguistic enquiries. The second part of the chapter discusses the method, drawn from the social constructionist sociolinguistics. Focusing on the construction of identity – in this case, character identity – such an approach looks at language as a repository of social meanings. A framework is proposed, which enables an explanation for the operation of social indexicality of language both at the micro level of specific narrative purposes (character identity construction, development of interpersonal relations between the characters), and at the macro level that sees films in their entirety and focuses on the reflexive reading of the current state of society that they provide. The final section of this chapter justifies and outlines how the following analysis will be structured.

Chapter 3, the background chapter considering the cinema of the early post-Soviet period, contextualises the medium from which the data is derived. Developments in the conditions of film production and distribution in the 1980s-1990s are discussed. Positing the constitutive influence of contemporary socio-political realities on cinematic output, the central concern of the cinema with national identity is brought to light. With the focus of early post-Soviet cinema on the search for identity, it is argued, a social constructionist method of analysis is appropriate. Having provided a general outline of the cinematic concerns of the time, the chapter moves on to the data used in this thesis. Criteria for data selection are provided and justified. The six films chosen are then introduced in turn, with their synopses and critical reception briefly discussed.

Chapters 4 and 5 constitute the analytical part of this work. Chapter 4 examines the use of social stereotypes in the construction of minor characters. Based on the conceptualisation of stereotypes by Allport (1954), Dyer (1993) and Hewstone and Giles (1997), this chapter posits that social stereotypes are often used in the cinema to provide ‘shortcuts’ to character identities, with socially marked language varieties often serving as useful tools for it. To reveal how slang, argot and obscenities are used to index stereotypical social connections, I consider cinematic construction of three social groups: youth, criminals and the uneducated. Looking at the use of slang, argot and obscenities by minor characters, which are the most susceptible to being constructed through essentially presented social stereotypes, makes it possible to see which stereotypes are most frequently called upon, and if they ever get subverted or renegotiated. Discussion of social stereotypes relies to a large extent on the interplay between the verbal and the visual, with the visual component becoming especially prominent in the discussion of self-stereotyping. The chapter, thus, examines the ways in which social stereotypes are shown to be drawn on in the representation of minor characters,

constructing them as an effective tool, which can be used both conventionally and controversially.

Chapter 5 expands on the use of non-standard language in character identity construction, this time including all the verbal exchanges which contain the use of slang, argot or obscenities. The focus is shifted onto the dynamics of characterisation, as it examines the cinematic representation of identity work. Following discussion of conceptual approaches to the process of identity management, it is suggested that identity work can find onscreen representation in two ways: either through positioning the speaker in relation to the interlocutor (interpersonal dimension), or positioning the speaker in relation to wider social configurations and discourses (ideational dimension). Both dimensions are then scrutinised. Analysis of the operation of language variation on the interpersonal dimension is carried out, drawing on the insights provided by Giles' Accommodation Theory and Brown & Levinson's politeness theory. In the analysis of the ideational level, some aspects of masculinity and power studies are drawn upon (e.g. Sattel, Kiesling). The analysis thus shows the multiplicity of dimensions, on which slang, argot and obscenities can become operational. It reveals how these lexical varieties can be used both to signal developments within interpersonal relations, and to mark the character's (or, indeed, filmmaker's) stance towards wider social discourses.

# **Chapter 1. Approaches to the study of non-standard language varieties**

## **Introduction**

The thesis introduction has outlined the main theoretical and methodological concerns that inform the approach taken by this study. This chapter will expand on some of the main points that have been introduced, constructing a theoretical framework for the following work. In the light of the preceding discussion, a critical perspective on the conceptualisation of standard languages will be adopted. It is hence deemed pertinent to start by taking a closer look at the way standard language ideology has been propagated in the Russian domain, affecting the construction of the literary (standard) language as the most influential linguistic variety and the positioning of non-standard in opposition to it.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the conceptualisation of standard and non-standard varieties of Russian language. I start by outlining existing approaches to research in this area (section 1), and contrasting them to those developed within Western (socio)linguistics, bringing attention to the relevance of the latter for the current study (section 2). However, as will be expanded upon further, non-standard language varieties are rich in social connotations; they are largely culture-specific and draw on a wide range of social, cultural and historic phenomena specific to the area of their distribution. This calls for further exploration of their source milieu, which will be provided in the last section of this chapter. Section 3 thus focuses on the contemporary developments in Russian language, contextualising the use of non-standard varieties in the public media. The final part of this section brings together the identified theoretical toolbox and the socio-cultural material users are likely to draw on when employing Russian slang, argot and obscenities, in order to uncover the identity constructionist and performative potential of Russian non-standard language varieties.

## **Section 1. The ideology of standardisation and conceptualisation of language standard within Soviet linguistics**

By Milroy's terminology, Russia belongs to the standard language cultures, which means that there exists a canonical form of language that is legitimised (1999). Albeit not universal, this situation is common to many of the so-called 'major' languages, in which the process of

standardisation has been triggered off by the socio-political conditions, and has influenced the conceptualisation of non-standard varieties as inferior and / or deficient as compared to the propagated language standard. Since the awareness of a superordinate standard variety finds reflection in conceptualisation of language variation, it is in order to start with an overview of the way the Russian standard (or literary) language has been conceptualised within the Soviet / Russian linguistic tradition.

### **1.1. Literary language and the superiority of written forms of language**

Scholars working to deconstruct the ideological underpinnings of standard languages have often commented on the reliance of the process of standardisation on the written forms of language (e.g. Milroy 1999: 27). In the case of Russian language, this has found reflection even in the preferred term used across the society in reference to the canonical form of language. The term 'literary' language can be understood in broad terms as equivalent to the term 'standard', however, this approximation should be approached with certain caution. The use of the definition 'literary' reveals specific traits of the concept itself, and has a long standing tradition of use. This was underlined by Filin, who states that there have been attempts among certain Slavists to make use of the term 'standard language', but that even the most passionate proponent of this, Yugoslav linguist D. Brozovich, who had named his 1970 book *Standardni jezik*, still agreed that the term that he recommends 'can only be used in the narrow field of linguistics and would never substitute the usual name, accepted in the society' (1981:190).

A historic overview of the use of the term *литературный язык* (literary language) is given by Paulsen in his PhD thesis (2009). He traces the term back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, claiming, however, that for the first few decades it was used as an occasionalism, just as often used as an ordinary collocation in the sense of the language of literature, as an academic term. It was further into the 20th century before the term 'literary' language 'went from being a regular term, with one or more definitions, to being a concept in the general understanding of the word, that is, as the central idea in a particular academic discipline' (Paulsen 2009: 69).

It was not a coincidence that the term 'literary' language finally congealed its meaning at about the same time that the process of language standardisation intensified, since drawing on the cognate links between the concept of literary language in the meaning of standard and the language of literature was seen as conducive to the ideological goals. Taking up the

words of such 19th century writers and literary critics as Turgenev and Belinsky who saw Pushkin as the source and the creator of contemporary Russian literary language, early 20th century linguists (e.g. Shahmatov, Chernyshev) elaborated upon the role of literature in the formation of the 'literary' standard. Chernyshev, for example, as Paulsen points out, 'wanted to describe the cultivated language, and this is where literature came to play a crucial role, since to him it was precisely through literature that language was cultivated' (2009: 69). This established the initial link between the literary language and the language of classical literature that gained prominence in the Russian / Soviet linguistic tradition and came to determine the approaches to the conceptualisation of literary language in the following decades.

Importantly, literature was seen not only as the historic influence on the formation of the literary language, but as an active norm-defining agent. This view was expressed in a variety of works on language norms, which, irrespective of whether the author argued for them being of static or dynamic nature, defined them through the connection with literature. Peshkovsky's primary interest in the pedagogical application of norms, for example, determined his focus on the stability of norms. As early as 1924 he claimed that 'the norm is an ideal that has once and forever been achieved' (1959: 55). Conservatism (as he called it) of the literary language norms was connected for him with the need of the people to understand the literature of the preceding generations and to be able to draw on this literary heritage to produce their own literature. Norms were perceived by him as a specific feature of literary language as opposed to the spoken language varieties, where the developments are much more rapid and significant without drastically impeding the communication. Literature, however, is required to apply the norms in order to ensure the continuity of the literary tradition. This tight connection between literature and the norms was equally foregrounded by Gorbachevich who is credited with having conducted the most detailed studies of the norms of the literary language (1971, 1978, etc). Despite him standing on the grounds of the dynamic nature of norms (that is, of the presence of acceptable variations within the norm that serve as a source for their further development and change), his definition states that 'the norms of the literary language is a relatively stable way (or ways) of expression, that reflects historic regularities of language development, **is fixed in the best works of literature** and preferred by the educated part of the society' (1971: 19, my emphasis). For him, hence, the literary tradition is not only the reason for the existence of norms, but also the main source of their confirmation. As can be seen from the works of these scholars, despite their different perspectives on the nature of norms, literature was

commonly perceived as the actor that determined and justified the norms of literary language, elevating the written form of language into the superior position.

### **1.2. Literary language as an unobtainable ideal**

Literary language was hence conceptualised as being cognate to and dependent on the language of literature. At the same time, and somewhat contradictory, it was often pronounced to be a natural entity, masking the ideological nature of the construct. Vinogradov, for example, is often quoted as claiming that 'despite all the differences in the understanding of this concept, literary language is universally recognized to be unquestionable reality' (1967: 100). This is echoed by Filin, who states that 'literary language is created by the nation, just like the language in general' (1981: 3).

The concept of the nation-creator of the literary language, mentioned by Filin, is in itself a problematic notion. In the definition suggested by Peshkovsky as early as 1924, the 'literary "dialect" (as he calls it) arises as the language of a dominant in some sense tribe [...], as a language that needs to be mastered in order to succeed in any walk of life, substituting with it your own home-grown, everyday life language' (1959 [1924]: 54). The social importance of literary language is further emphasised in a 1967 book dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Soviet Linguistics, which talks about the importance of Russian literary language not only as the common language for all the peoples of the Soviet Union, but also as the one that has been 'mastered' by the ethnically Russian population, who had been 'predominantly illiterate before the Revolution, raised in the traditions of dialectal speech and urban vernacular' (Filin et al. 1967: 13). What follows from these views is that the nation-creator refers first and foremost to the 'elite class' (in Milroy's terms) that includes those living in Moscow and Leningrad (as the politically and socially dominating 'tribe' described by Peshkovsky) who have acquired their language skills through education and the reading of classical literature.

And yet, even the process of literary language acquisition was conceived of as a non-finite one. This was reflected in the way many linguists talked of the codified norms of literary language as a framework against which they could judge the correctness of language use, admitting that both the linguists and the writers made mistakes themselves (e.g. Gorbachevich 1971: 12; Filin 1981: 151). This emphasises the conception of the language system as a hierarchy where the literary language is positioned on top. What is more, this 'top' language variety presents a stable and uniform entity that can be mastered by the

population to a smaller or larger extent, but never fully. It is regarded as an unobtainable ideal.<sup>2</sup>

### **1.3. Causes and consequences of standardisation**

Traditional conceptualisation of the literary language, described above, was vested with symbolic value that can be further explored with the use of Bourdieusean perspective on the language system as a market, which serves as a place for competition between different language varieties. Bourdieu singles out the dominant language as the one providing its users with 'the chances of material and symbolic profit which the laws of price formation characteristic of a given market objectively offer to the holders of a given linguistic capital' (1991:51). However, while Bourdieu bases his discussion on the competition between various regional varieties of the same language, French, in an arguably monolingual country,<sup>3</sup> it is important to note that Russian literary language in the Soviet times was, de facto, the state language of a multi-lingual country. It meant that, on the one hand, its propagation served an important political purpose of unification, while, on the other hand, the scale of its dissemination provided its users with higher profits. The literary language hence served as a vehicle for the existence of a multinational state, the adoption of which by the entire population of the country was more than just the case of their ability to communicate with each other. 'That the Bolsheviks assumed power of an enormous modernizing nation severely lagging and crippled by a series of wars, revolution, and famine meant that they had to depend almost entirely on the symbolic power of the word for legitimacy' (Gorham 2003: 176). In his work, Gorham traces the reasons for the rigid standardisation of language and creation of the literary language myth to the turbulent times of the post-revolutionary period (from 1917 to early 1930s). He shows how various voices took turns in dominating the country's rhetoric during this period – revolutionary, popular, national and party-state – and how finally the latter managed to incorporate the former three and mould a language ideology aimed at securing political and social stability of the country.

---

<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, the phrase 'language ideal' is used rather frequently when describing the normative side of literary language.

<sup>3</sup> At least, in the official state identification of it. For more on linguistic culture in France, see Schiffman (1996).

One of the key reasons for the consolidation of standard language ideology in the Soviet period was the need to control vast areas of formal communication. Codification of language reduces its natural dynamic forces and establishes fields of linguistic use that require adherence to normative usage, at the expense of creativity and expression. At its extreme, standardization resulted in the so called 'new speak'<sup>4</sup>, which was often used in public speeches and formal communication - a language full of stock phrases and devoid of any expressive power. As the language of everyday communication between people is unlikely to be easily controlled, the propagation of codified and standardized literary language and its further reduction to 'new speak' for use in certain formal domains was a logical continuation of the Soviet State's obsession with control over all aspects of citizens' lives. Political underpinnings can also be traced in the purism that resulted from the State-wide propagation of the use of standard language. In his discussion of language purism, Schiffman suggests that central to purist linguistic policies is a belief system, in which 'there may also be a belief that purity is associated with a religious state, that is by keeping the language pure we keep religion pure, which helps keep the world from disintegrating' (1996: 62). In the Soviet Union literary language gained a similar, almost religious symbolic value, being simultaneously the tool of communication of the multilingual state, and the means of control over the linguistic behaviour of its speakers.

This necessity to set high values for the chosen language variety, according to Bourdieu, requires the involvement of grammarians, establishment writers and academies, who 'tend to consecrate and codify a particular use of language by rationalizing it and "giving reason" to it' (1991: 59). Dependence of the Soviet power on language has subsequently determined the prioritised avenues of academic research, which were set to focus on language codification rather than variation, especially as the 1930s, Gorham notes, 'marked the beginning of an age in which incantation, rather than innovation, became the guiding linguistic principle' and 'the diversity of public language became largely muted by the pressures for verbal conformity to the "magic word"' (Gorham 2003: 178). Political constraints imposed on academic research resulted in an often unbalanced approach to the study of language, which foregrounded links to the language of classical literature, and worked on the language codification and facilitation of its further dissemination among the many peoples of the Soviet Union. The

---

<sup>4</sup> This term was coined by Orwell in his book '1984' (1949) and was taken up by Eastern European linguists when referring to the dry official language typical of the totalitarian states. For further discussion of this term, see Zemskaia 2000: 19.

expressive richness of the non-standard varieties and their use in informal communication was disregarded, due to the ideological bias against the marginal social groups associated with them. The next subsection will expand on the way political processes and mechanisms influenced the development of linguistic research in the Soviet Union and contributed to the establishment of Russian literary language in its rigidly codified form as a 'hegemonic language ideology' (Paulsen 2009: 65).

#### **1.4. Perspectives on non-standard language varieties**

Strong focus of the Soviet linguistic study on the literary language and its codification was rooted in the particular socio-political context of the early Soviet period, and yet, the nature of this orientation was not unique to the Soviet milieu. Following Milroy and Milroy (1985), I take the processes described above to be typical for the development of a standard language culture, in which, according to Milroy, 'the standard language is very highly valued and identified with the language as a whole' (1999: 26). What follows from this, logically, is that 'standardisation inhibits linguistic change and variability' (ibid: 27). This consideration is especially important to keep in mind when exploring conceptualisation of non-standard language varieties in standard language cultures, as it helps to uncover ideological nature of certain sets of pronouncements on the language use and users, as shown in the following account.

With the literary language being conceived of as the dominant and maximally uniform language variety, the other language varieties would have to be conceived of as inferior to it. As a matter of fact, and in line with the prevailing Marxist-Leninist social theory, it was even at times suggested that the literary language should eventually take over as the only language variety - e.g. Finkel' & Bazhenov call regional and social dialects 'the remnants of the old feudal system' (1960:9) and follow on to suggest that the 'construction of a classless socialist society [...] leads to the dissolution of the dialects in the literary language' (ibid). Other scholars, however, have often accepted non-literary language varieties as valid, but stylistically restricted and functionally limited forms of the all-national language.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore pertinent to explore further how the notions of style and function have been applied

---

<sup>5</sup> Stylistic differentiation and functional universality are often named as main features of the literary language: e.g. Filin 1981, Gorbachevich 1978, Isachenko 1958 etc.

to the study of non-literary language varieties, to relate them to the literary stratum, and to delimit their areas of use and groups of speakers.

The discussions of non-literary language varieties and their interconnections with the literary stratum in the Soviet times have been predominantly placed within the two branches of the Soviet linguistics – those being stylistics and language culture. Regarded as having the same object of enquiry – accepted contexts of use for certain words and grammatical forms, they viewed the matter from different perspectives. Studies placed within the field of language culture would predominantly consider correspondence of certain aspects of language use to the existing rules of the literary language use and more often than not would take a prescriptive stand, whereas stylistics would be more involved with the aesthetic aspect and regard appropriateness and suitability to the aims of the utterance (e.g. G. Vinokur 1929, Deriagin 1978, etc).

Studies in stylistics have a long standing tradition in Russia and stem from the 18th century works of Lomonosov, who gave scientific foundation to the classical 'theory of three styles', applying it to the Russian language. In the Soviet times stylistics became an integral part of the philological tradition of linguistics and stylistic differentiation of language has been widely discussed both with regards to the works of literature and to the other (predominantly written) forms of language.<sup>6</sup> Taking into consideration the three main functions of language (communication, information and effect) and the contexts of use, Vinogradov identifies the following functional styles: 'everyday domestic style (function of communication); everyday business, official documentary and scientific (function of information); journalistic and literary fictional (function of effect)' (1963: 6-7).

The numerous subsequent works on stylistic differentiation making use of Vinogradov's system of functional styles showed strict correlation between the adherence to language norms and the level of formality of speech. As Shmelev put it: 'our conception of style exists as a conception of a certain system of norms – those, which, like all other norms, can at certain times be deviated from' (1977: 46). While such language styles as *обиходно-бытовой* (everyday domestic) allowed for deviations from the norms, all public domains were to be served by strictly codified 'literary' language. It is worth noting that even the

---

<sup>6</sup> Vinogradov identified three types of stylistics – structural stylistics, stylistics of the public use of language and stylistics of literature (1963: 5).

spoken variety of public speech (e.g. official speeches, lectures, media reports) was conceptualised as being closer to the written language than to the spoken colloquial one due to the fact that most publicly spoken texts were read from written rather than presented as spontaneous speech (e.g. Shmelev 1977).

In the language of literature, the valuation of non-literary elements varied depending on their type and the function within the text. T. Vinokur (1968) analyses developments in the use of non-literary language varieties in the literary works of the Soviet period and shows how the stages in the literary representation of non-literary speech corresponded to the wider social changes. She starts with what she calls 'language turmoil' (1968: 83) of 1920-30s which found reflection in the literature through the abundant use of non-literary varieties, predominantly social and regional dialects. These, according to her, were used not as exotic items, but as expressive means of reproduction of the democratisation processes that were happening in the literary language and were connected to the destruction of the old norms (ibid).

The policy of language standardisation, adopted in the late 1930s, resulted in the domination of neutral style throughout the works of literature in the following period. In most cases, according to T. Vinokur, 'the character's utterance would continue the neutral line of authorial narrative' (1968: 88). Finally, in the time period contemporary to her writing (1950-60s), representation of colloquial speech would be limited to those expressively marked elements that would not violate the norms of the literary language and the writing itself would make use of the 'interstylistic contrasts within the literary language' (ibid: 90) rather than the non-literary language varieties as was typical of the first post-Revolutionary period.

The clash between the expressive and the aesthetic qualities of non-literary speech varieties has been commented upon further by Efimov, who took rude and hackneyed expressions as example of what can be regarded as undoubtedly expressive but nevertheless inappropriate for a work of literature, 'which is connected to the notions of beauty, admiration and enjoyment' (1961: 115). Deviation from the norms of literary language use, at least in certain ways, equalled for him the breach of aesthetic conventions. This aesthetic deficiency of non-literary language varieties was foregrounded even more in the scholarly works placed within the field of language culture.

The research within the field of language culture was initiated by G. Vinokur in the late 1920-s and initially closely associated with stylistics. The term '*языковая культура*'<sup>7</sup> (more commonly known as *культура речи* in later decades), introduced by G. Vinokur, implied awareness of stylistic differentiation and encouraged 'rational direction of language processes' (1929: 342). Having moved away from normative stylistics, language culture has adopted strong pedagogical, as well as ideological emphasis, propagating language use that would comply with the existing codified rules of the literary language in all contexts including spoken speech, often applying such levels of categorisation as 'correct' vs. 'incorrect' and 'good' vs. 'bad'. Studies in language culture were therefore closely tied to the ideology of standardisation and language purification which was pronounced as required after the massive influx into the literary language of non-literary words and grammatical forms during the 1920s. What is important to note here is that 'notions of *purification, spoiling, mangling, regional, obsolete, real* and *classical* – when used in conjunction with language – all function as broader moral and ideological signifiers, indications of a certain dynamic of power and authority' (Gorham 2003: 105). For Gorham, when the literary language is being attributed the 'full power, authority and legitimacy' (2003: 107), the discourse of 'spoiling' implies that there are those who do the spoiling, who are therefore antagonised in such discourse. It will not come as a surprise then that non-literary language was marginalised if not outlawed in the writing of this sort.

An example of conceptualisation of non-literary from the language culture perspective can be taken from 1984 work of Devkin *On the types of non-literary speech* which he pre-empted with the definition of non-literary language 'as the violation of language correctness from the point of view of an educated person'. He then follows on to compare 'language purity' to the 'care of the environment, protection of the historic monuments, respect to the national pride and attention to the history of a nation as part of the policy that governs the spiritual life of the society' (1984: 12).

The discourse of standardisation becomes even clearer from the list of the types of non-literary speech that he gives: 1. regional dialects; 2. speech of uneducated people; 3. breach of 'ethical conventions' – either out of ignorance or purposefully; 4. inclusion of various deviations from the codified literary norm, in the speech that is otherwise indisputably

---

<sup>7</sup> Language culture

literary; 5. unjustified use of elevated language (1984: 13). Non-literary language is thus shown as emanating from the geographical, educational and ethical margins of the society. In line with this, the second entry emphasises the point that literary language is not available to all people born into a certain linguistic community, but only accessible through the process of 'initiation' in the form of secondary school or even university education.

With regards to slang, argot and obscenities, the third and the fourth entries seem to be especially noteworthy. The third type seems to point rather straightforwardly to the use of obscene vocabulary. However, as the notion of 'ethical conventions' remains in the article without further explanation, it remains unclear if the other linguistic varieties could be included into this category. It is also one of the most ambiguous entries due to the heavy load of moral judgement embedded into it. The fourth category, albeit somewhat more specific, leaves the readers to wonder if such language varieties as slang and argot would fit into the description. In this case, the problem is caused by the definition of 'indisputably literary' speech. Zemskaja identifies three characteristics of the Russian literary language speaker – 1. native speaker, 2. born and raised in the city, 3. with completed high school or university level education (1973:7). Looking at this definition, it seems rather doubtful that literary language speakers would be the primary users of either slang or argot, however, all other types of speakers would not fall within the limits set by the category. Equally unreasonable would be to limit the use of slang and argot to the speech of un-educated people, as in the second category, e.g. since slang is known to be extensively used by the university students. It follows, hence, that slang and argot remain unaccounted for in this categorisation and constitute a phenomenon that was not deemed by the author to be worthy of consideration.

Described above are the perspectives on the non-literary language varieties expressed within the fields of stylistics and language culture. With stylistics being mainly interested in the written forms of language and language culture presenting views charged with the ideology of language standardisation, the perspectives discussed above stand in line with their objects and methods of study. It would be natural to assume, however, that an alternative, and somewhat more accepting, view on non-literariness should come from the field of sociolinguistics. Such an approach to the study of language that looked at the speakers of language as its source has indeed existed despite being somewhat less noticeable in the Soviet times. It stemmed from the works of Polivanov, Bakhtin, Selishev who focused their

work from 1920s – early 30s on the issues of language evolution and its connection to the society. This direction of research has, however, been abandoned during the following period,<sup>8</sup> and it has only picked up again after the publication of a four-volume study edited by M. Panov with the title of *Russian language and Soviet society* (1968). Based on the sociological survey of a large number of speakers, the study presents an overview of linguistic variations on different levels (lexical, grammatical, phonological etc.), found in the speech of the contemporary population, and theorises regarding the development of the Russian language. Panov suggested that the language system possesses five sets of inherent oppositions ('antinomies') that determine the path of language development at any point in time (1968: 24-28). However, as he pointed out, 'even the internal forces of language development are not socially inert' (ibid: 34) and their realisation in language is often hastened by changes in social conditions (ibid: 35). This emphasis on the social aspect of language use laid conceptual grounds for later study of non-literary language varieties, e.g. the study of spoken language by Zemskaia which she claimed to present a complete language system separate from that of the literary language (1973: 25).

Despite the advancements of sociolinguistics with regards to the phonological and regional dialectal aspects of non-literariness, more ambiguous lexical deviations from the norm, like those realised in youth slang and criminal argot, were much more problematic as the objects of study. The idea that certain types of non-literary language stand at breach of ethical conventions has been so pervasive within the field of language culture that it has influenced even the writings of a more sociolinguistic orientation. As pointed out by Kostsinskiy in an article that tried to argue that jargons constitute a valid object of study, 'the problem of our lexicology still consists in the fact that it predominantly studies 'good' words' (1968: 187). As a result many of the existent studies of non-literary language had to adapt to the ideological requirements of the time and often trenched upon the field of language culture.

A 1964 article by Skvortsov that presents the most extensive account of the position of (youth) slang and (criminals') argot in the system of the Soviet Russian language is a case in point. Tellingly published in the volume entitled *Issues of Linguistic Culture*, this article establishes the contemporary understanding of the term jargon (used for a variety of social

---

<sup>8</sup> The fates of the scholars themselves were just as non-linear as of their research. E.g. Polivanov was accused of espionage, tortured and executed in 1938. His works were henceforth condemned as 'unscientific' and banned from further publications until his rehabilitation in 1963.

dialects). Skvortsov claims that in its pure original meaning jargon as the 'closed speech usage of a certain social community or group'(1964: 46) does not exist in the modern (Soviet) society as there are no social grounds for it. He also rather plausibly agrees with Likhachev on that 'it is not possible to speak of thieves' lingo in the full meaning of this word, we can only trace thieves' elements, which are being introduced into ordinary language' (1935 in Skvortsov 1964: 46). Skvortsov's stand is therefore that there is a difference between jargon as such and jargonised language, that as a matter of fact does exist and serves a variety of functions. He follows on to state that one of the most characteristic uses of jargonised language is to establish commonality of membership in a certain social group. This, however, can be realised in two ways: directly – by the members of the same social groups, and indirectly (what Skvortsov calls 'romantisation') through appropriation of vocabulary of a group that the speaker wants to identify themselves with despite not being a member of. The other function of jargonised language, identified by Chukovskii, is the protest against the 'glossy, false, prudishly well-meaning' language of text-books and schooling (1961 in Skvortsov 1964: 65). Jargonised language is also identified in the article as being used in order to add expressive colour to speech of a rather well-educated person and is often employed in literature to enhance characterisation.

Despite the solid sociolinguistic analysis of jargon in the first part of the article, Skvortsov continues with a more language-cultural discussion of the criteria that can be used to distinguish between acceptable and non-acceptable uses of jargon. For him, jargon-ised language is acceptable if the introduction of specific vocabulary into the speech creates a kind of diglossia in the speaker. The use of jargon in the pure form is deemed unacceptable because it stems from socially defective groups and presents therefore a surface realisation of the deeper social problem.

The ideology of standardisation has hence manifested itself in all of the traditional Soviet linguistic perspectives on the non-literary language varieties. With the authority of the literary language regarded as indisputable, acceptance of non-literary elements was partial and often required justification. In its extreme, some non-literary language varieties, like those of pure jargons, were conceived of as 'unintelligible' and 'truly vulgar' because of their ideological colour (Skvortsov 1964: 69). These language varieties were deemed non-acceptable and their users were condemned. Other non-literary language varieties, including regional dialects and jargonised language of young people, were attributed varied degrees of acceptability (e.g. Devkin insists on the continuum of these linguistic elements). Over-abundance of these elements either in spoken speech or in literature was often linked to the

moral aspect and deemed 'dangerous' (Finkel' & Bazhenov 1960: 109). Such pronouncements were especially typical of the language-cultural works which called for the maximal compliance with the literary language rules. Stylistics scholars, on the other hand, believed non-literary elements to be appropriate for certain 'informal' contexts located within the system of functional styles, and sociolinguists even at times attempted to establish non-literary language varieties as valid and worthy objects of research. This required significant deviation from the existent ideological orientation of research, since, as pointed out by Kostsinskiy, 'scientific conception of the term *jargon* in the period of 1930-50s has been influenced by prevailing taste dictating sharply negative evaluation' (1968: 187).

The broadest tolerance was enjoyed by the non-literary varieties in the language of literature. Since literature has traditionally been conceptualised as having an 'emphasis on expression' and hence given the right for 'deformation, for violation of the literary language norms' (Vinogradov 1955: 15), moderate use of regional and social dialects was considered 'essential for writers for the purpose of characterisation, for realistic portrayal of various social groups and types' (Skvortsov 1964: 66), and writers (e.g. Dostoevskii, Nekrasov, Shukshin, Solzhenitsyn) were praised for their skilful use of dialects and jargons. However, even the significant authority enjoyed by writers in the Soviet times was not boundless and was tolerated only insofar as it did not contradict the State policy. Despite the academic advancements regarding the right of the literary author for linguistic violation and constitutional guarantees for the freedom of press,<sup>9</sup> in reality the books were subjected to multiple stages of censorship before they could be published. It is hence unsurprising that some non-literary language varieties (e.g. regional dialects) were deemed more acceptable and appeared more frequently, others (e.g. jargons) were censored more often (due to the ideological attitudes towards the social groups associated with them), and some would hardly appear at all (obscenities would be deemed inappropriate for the reader). Aesthetic value of the literary work, as discussed above, was after all tightly linked by stylistics scholars to the literary language.

---

<sup>9</sup> Hence the 1957 edition of the Big Soviet Encyclopaedia states that 'The Constitution of the USSR guarantees the freedom of press for all the working people' (1957: 519).

## **Section 2. Sociolinguistic approaches to research on language variation**

Having identified in the previous section the main traits of the traditional Soviet linguistic approach to the non-standard, it is now necessary to bring to attention the points of divergence between Russian and Western sociolinguistics by exploring the development of the latter away from the quantitative research that aimed to establish stable connections between social class and certain linguistic features, towards qualitative accounts of the use speakers make of linguistic variation in order to construct or modulate their identity. Further rise of constructionist sociolinguistic research on the speakers' identity can be linked to the transition to post-modernity with its increased awareness of available choices. Characterising social life in post-modernity as 'packaged as a set of lifestyle options able to be picked up and dropped', Coupland suggests that the current era 'complicates social identities, social relationships and social institutions as it detraditionalises and destabilises life' (2007: 29). This can only be true in the case of Russia where the move away from the modernist values and lifestyles was enhanced by the collapse of the established hierarchical system typical of the Soviet society. The search for 'new' identity became an issue on both individual and national levels, creating complex sets of interrelations between 'the old' and 'the new'. I would hence argue that an analysis of post-Soviet discourse, especially focusing on such non-standard (and hence expressively charged) language varieties as slang, argot and obscenities, should necessarily take into account the identity management value of these varieties. In this section, I describe conceptualisation of non-standardness among Western scholars as they moved away from the linear models towards more recent and complex accounts that make use of the close analysis of the individual instances of identity construction.

### **2.1. Early approaches: Labov and the equality of studied variants**

This subsection shifts the focus from language 'standard' to language variation. This is the area in which the divergence between the Soviet and the Western (predominantly, Anglo-American) linguistic approaches in the past half a century has been most significant. It needs to be said, however, that prior to the tightening of internal policies by Stalin in the 1930s there existed a strong early Soviet school of sociolinguistics. Such scholars as E. D. Polivanov, L. P. Iakubinskii, V. M. Zhirmunskii, A. M. Selischev, and the most known abroad M. M. Bakhtin, have produced a large body of works that concerned itself with the social dimension of language. Various reasons, some of which have been discussed above,

caused the interruption in the development of this field, consigning to oblivion the names of prominent scholars and cancelling their work from the linguistic tradition that was to be drawn upon. M. Bakhtin is a case in point. A prominent scholar in the 1920s, he was denounced in the early 1930s and was only rediscovered, translated and published abroad in the 1960s. Some of his ideas are strikingly in line with the current areas of enquiry in sociolinguistics (as well as a number of other disciplines) and as such they will be reviewed further.

With the denunciation of the early Soviet school of sociolinguistics, further Soviet-Russian research focused primarily on the literary language as the superior and dominant language variety, often linking the use of language varieties lying outside the realm of literary language to the lack of education, culture or, even, moral values (cf. Milroy and Milroy's discussion of *complaint tradition* (1999)). After the publication of innovative research undertaken by Labov, Western sociolinguistics, on the contrary, has been much more open to generating theoretical frameworks that would undermine the special status of the Standard language.

The 1960s was the time of significant (re)negotiation and development of linguistic ideas in various subfields, which included the establishment of sociolinguistics as a separate discipline and the rise of attention to the 'social' determinant of language. Educational psychologists of the 1960s foregrounded the conflict between standard English as the medium of education and the attribute of the middle-class on the one side, and non-standard vernacular on the other, with the latter often conceived of as deficient and 'non-logical mode of expressive behaviour' (Bereiter in Labov 1972: 184). Widely referring to Bernstein's 'deficit hypothesis',<sup>10</sup> they have argued that the educational problems of lower-class children stemmed from their 'verbal deprivation' in pre-school years. Strongly opposed to these biased views, Labov published an article that aimed to disprove some of the most common misconceptions (or myths, as he calls them) regarding non-standard vernacular. There he furthers the following arguments: 'social situation is the most powerful determinant of verbal behaviour' (Labov 1972: 191), non-standard vernacular can be (and is) used for dealing with abstract or hypothetical questions, just as well as standard English (ibid: 196), the need for

---

<sup>10</sup> Bernstein (e.g. 1971) suggested that working-class children internalized a 'restricted code' from their parents' limited syntax, which resulted in them doing badly at school where middle-class teachers judged them in terms of their own 'elaborated code'.

standard English in certain fields of communication (like formal writing and public communication) is the result of a firmly fixed social convention (ibid: 197).

Two points stand out in these arguments that are of special importance to the development of ideas on non-standard language varieties. One of them concerns the social aspect of language differentiation. Labov argues that the non-standard vernacular has the same grammatical and verbal capacity as the standard variety, and therefore language differentiation stems predominantly from the social conventions. It is through social conventions that certain language varieties acquire prestige, while the others are stigmatised, making them inappropriate for use in certain contexts. The significant theoretical achievements of variationist sociolinguistics have validated the linguistic equality of the studied variants as one of the basic premises for its work. While equality in terms of 'sameness' has often been challenged (with regards to the connotative and social meanings attached to the varieties),<sup>11</sup> equality as the affirmation of the fact that none of the variants is superior to the other has provided fruitful grounds for further research and opened up wider alleys of enquiry into the factors that determine language variation.

The other point refers to the dependence of speaker's style on the circumstances of the speech event, which foregrounds its non-homogenous nature. Focused upon in the abovementioned article with regards to schoolchildren's verbality in a variety of settings, this has also been a prominent consideration in Labov's other works. Thus, Labov's first work (1963) was not only a major breakthrough in terms of devising sociolinguistic methodology, but was also significant in showing how the choice between variables can depend on the social motivations of the speakers, that is, to be neither random nor show rigid correlation with the basic social categories (e.g. age, gender, occupation).<sup>12</sup> Labov's following work on the distribution of variables in the speech of New Yorkers (1966) brought to fore the notion of style, which he used to evaluate the differences in variables as used by speakers in four different styles, ranging from less to more formal (conversation with the interviewer → reading aloud). Proven correlation between the formality of style and the use of a variable closer to language standard showed that the attention speakers pay to their speech can be an important constraint on variation.

---

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Coupland 2001: 190, Lavandera 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Labov's survey of Martha's Vineyard showed that the variation in speakers' pronunciation indexes depended on 1) geographical location on the island; 2) occupation; 3) age; 4) attitude to living on the island, with the fourth correlation proving to be pivotal in overall analysis.

## 2.2. Giles and Bell: the turn towards the speaker

Emerging criticism of the links between speech style and attention to speech, established in Labov's work (1966) resulted in the rise of interest to the agentivity of the speakers. Shift of focus to the way 'non-standard' elements are employed by the speakers to accommodate for their communicative and social needs, gave impetus to such theoretical frameworks as that of speech accommodation theory (Giles 1973) and audience design (Bell 1984).

Trying to address some of the weaknesses of Labov's model of speech styles, in 1973 Giles proposes a speech accommodation theory.<sup>13</sup> Working from the perspective of Social Psychology, Giles has argued against the 'egocentric' speaker behaviour, as it was emerging from Labov's work. According to him, the speakers, instead of focusing on their own speech, shift the style depending on the norms associated with different addressees.

Giles' theory revolves round the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Borrowed from the studies of social psychology, accommodation becomes the central concept in his theory, referring 'to how interactants adjust their communication so as to either diminish or enhance social and communicative differences between them' (2009: 278). Drawing on the principles of human interaction, Giles distinguishes between convergence, non-convergence and divergence. The speakers are seen as consciously making the choice of either attuning their speech to the speech style / social needs / perceptual capacities of the addressee (convergence), or maintaining their own style (non-convergence). Importantly, the speaker is also capable of 'diverging', that is, altering his/her normal speech style away from the addressee's in order to emphasise the personal / social identity.

Giles shows how the speakers alter their speech style depending on the communicative and / or social goals of interaction with the addressee. This has signified the turn towards more agentive conceptualisation of the speaker, bringing to fore the social context of the speech-event which would include the interrelations between the speaker and the audience. These aspects have been further enlightened in the works of Bell (e.g. 1984).

Unlike Giles, Bell was working from sociolinguistic perspective and focused primarily on the speakers' use of language. The main concept of his theory, audience design, was broadly based on the speech accommodation model, but with some significant modifications. In his

---

<sup>13</sup> Now commonly referred to as Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT).

research on the radio broadcasts, Bell studied the speech samples from two radio stations, in which the contents of speech (news stories) as well as the speakers (news presenters) stayed practically the same. The presence of style-shifting that occurred in the speakers when they moved from one speech context (radio station) to another, revealed that audience can be a determinant factor in style-shifting not only in face-to-face but in mass communication as well.

Moving beyond the considerations of face-to-face communication has brought to the fore previously unaccounted issues that Bell has tried to enlighten in his work. One of them regards the ability of the speaker to design their style for different kinds of audience, depending on whether or not they are known, ratified or addressed. Bell has suggested to distinguish between the ways in which addressee, auditor, overhearer and eavesdropper influence the speaker's speech style, stating that although it is the addressees who make the greatest impact on the style, the awareness of the speaker of the other (groups) of listeners would also play a role in the choice of communicative style.

Extending the audience design theory to include mass communication has also led Bell to consider the interrelations between the social and the stylistic types of variation. While in face-to-face communication speakers may shift their style to be more in line with the actual interlocutor's way of speaking (in CAT's terms – converge), in mass communication in order to converge the speaker has to approximate the norms of a group s/he is addressing. This (intraspeaker) style-shift would then echo the social (interspeaker) variation that exists in the community, and often rely on the 'social evaluation of speakers who use a given linguistic feature' (Bell 1984: 151).

Foregrounding the influence of audience on speaker's style, Bell has assumed the audience design to be responsive. He posited that the style shift emanates from the change in social situation – e.g. change of audience or change of context of speech that is closely associated with a different audience. Responsive behaviour cannot, however, explain all the instances of style shifting and there are situations, Bell notes, where style shift is initiative rather than responsive. For Bell, 'initiative shift is the marked case, which draws its force from the unmarked, responsive use of style' (1984: 184). It is derivative in that it makes use of the same mechanisms and norms of association as the responsive style shift. However, while the latter converges towards the audience or the speech situations through the use of certain devices, the former uses these customary devices in order to evoke such associations. It is in this initiative behaviour that the speaker comes out as the most agentive user of the language, making 'creative use of language resources often from beyond the immediate speech

community, such as distant dialects, or stretches those resources in novel directions [...] infusing the flavour of one setting into a different context' (Bell 2009: 273).

### **2.3. Coupland's theory of style**

Bell failed to provide further description of initiative shift, but the concept of non-responsive style-shifting introduced in his work has given grounds for further developments in sociolinguistic research on style, namely, the constructionist theory of Coupland (e.g. 2007). Coupland approaches intraspeaker variation in terms of persona management, which he sees as the driving force behind the behaviour of individuals, who 'within and across speaking situations, manipulate the conventionalized social meanings of dialect varieties' (Coupland 2001:198). Foregrounding the agentive nature of speakers' behaviour, Coupland conceives of style as being consciously constructed in the course of a speech event. This stands in stark contrast with the earlier understandings of style, seen as a stable quality of speech derived from the social background of the speaker and/or conditions of a speech event.

Coupland's view shifts the focus from the notion of style, seen as a pre-determined product of external conditions, to the agentive process of its activation from a multitude of available alternatives. Here the emphasis is not on style itself but rather on *styling* and *stylisation*. This distinction, suggested by Coupland, regards *styling* as a more mundane, everyday realisation of these 'creative, design-oriented processes through which social styles are activated in talk and, in that process, remade or reshaped' (Coupland 2007: 3), while *stylisation* refers to the instances of styling where a more distant identity is being targeted, most commonly occurring in what Bauman calls 'high performances' (1992: 46ff) – pre-scheduled, planned, temporally and spatially bounded, non-exclusive public events. However, while applying this distinction is useful, it is also important to keep in mind that it has been introduced not in order to draw the line between the 'natural' way of speaking and its 'performed' counterpart, but, quite on the opposite, to bring to attention the similarities that exist in these seemingly different activities. The emphasis on the performance of an identity, that is, the ability of speakers to pick-and-mix from a variety of socially charged language elements to achieve their communicative goals, becomes the core of Coupland's theory, bringing sociolinguistics to address some of the issues that are prominent within the contemporary humanities, like

questioning the stability of social class<sup>14</sup> and the tangible nature of identity. His work builds upon both the relevant findings of the preceding sociolinguistic research, and the current ideas from the other adjoining disciplines. Since Coupland's theory is central to the following study, I would like to expand further on some of the important new ideas introduced in his work, as well as comment on those points where it overlaps with the other contemporary theories.

Coupland's theory of style has grown out of the same considerations as the audience design and the accommodation theory. Building upon Bell's and Giles' previous research, Coupland developed the correlation between the speaker style and the target audience in a new direction. Focusing on the agentive capacity of the speaker, he has assumed a position which was labelled by Meyerhoff the 'speaker-design' (2006: 44), since for him the style derives not from orientation towards the audience or speech situation, but largely from the speaker's social motivations and projected outcomes (Coupland 2001: 189).

Engaging widely with the preceding sociolinguistic research, Coupland provides extensive accounts of the shortcomings he finds in the variationist approach to style (e.g. 2001, 2007). Among the features he finds most flawed and pervasive, is the unidimensionalist approach to style. Focusing on identifying the stylistic patterns found in the society, in Coupland's opinion, deprives research of the ability to see the true – individual – nature of stylistic choices that are determined by the communicative purposes of the speaker. Criticising the methods applied by variationists to research on style, Coupland, however, acknowledges the awareness of the speakers of the existing social patterning of language use (wide circulation of certain dialect features within a specific social class, gender, age group etc) which can then acquire a second dimension of use through individual stylistic choices. 'It is the social meanings that attach to dialect variants through their social status distribution within communities that makes them available for stylistic signification,' states Coupland in his rendering of Bell's axiom (2001: 193). Thinking in terms of the process of style activation, Coupland attributes much importance to the indexicality of certain language elements. He, however, insists on a more inclusive reading of indexicality, which would allow the social meaning potential to be 'called up or activated or validated, or undermined or challenged or parodied, in particular discursive frames for particular effects' (2007: 24).

---

<sup>14</sup> For more on Coupland's critique of a stable notion of social class, see Coupland 2009a.

Interest towards contextual factors has been pervasive in the field of the humanities of the past few decades. Social and cultural elements are therefore vastly important in Coupland's conceptual framework, which brings them in not as stable concepts typical of Labovian era, but as fluid and ever changing background informants of speech. He calls for regarding the speech neither in the vacuum of artificially constructed situations (as was often the case with the variationist studies), nor in the context of a single speech event (as was typical of accommodation theory and audience design), but taking into consideration broader developments in the cultural and social life in which the speakers are embedded. Hence, he draws attention to Eckert's 'communities of practice' model (2000), which provides a sound example of research that is carried out sensitively to the social environment in which the speakers are embedded and through this succeeds in revealing the emergence of linguistic practices that then work to re-negotiate the existing social values that are attached to linguistic elements within the community. This, for Coupland, ties in with Bakhtin's notions of ventriloquation (speakers articulating meanings through others' voices) and heteroglossia (the presence of socio-ideological contradictions within the language at any given point in time) (Bakhtin 1981). The fact that the users draw on the existing social meaning potential existent in the language hence becomes just one side of the coin, the other one is the ability of the users to alter the associative links between words and identities. It becomes a 'communicative resource' (Coupland 2007). As such, 'meaning-imbued language variation does not simply present itself to speakers to fill out social identities and social positions as they choose [...] - socio-historical 'data' (forms and meanings) are available for reworking and recontextualising – in Bakhtin's term they are available for 'reaccentuating' (Coupland 2007: 105).

The consequentiality of the prior uses of an utterance for meaning-making in the present is, thus, central for both Bakhtin's *heteroglossia* and Butler's *historicity* (as described in the Introduction). As such, for Bakhtin *heteroglossia* means unavoidable inherent reverberations of all the previous uses of the word, for Butler, *historicity* is the accumulated force of the name. Another aspect of these two conceptual approaches that was drawn on and developed in Coupland's model is conceptualisation of the agentivity of the current speaker. With regards to this, Bakhtin's 'utterance is never just a reflection or an expression of something already existing outside it that is given and final' (1986: 119) and therefore it is the speaker that is the true author of the utterance, as even though he uses the *other's* words, he is creating something 'new and unrepeatable' out of them, something instilled with his own values and embedded in the context of a unique speech situation. Bakhtin's theory then regards every utterance as a unique instance not prone to group classification and statistical

analysis, with the value of single elements of this utterance only recoverable through the consideration of the utterance as a whole (be it a monosyllable exclamation or a multi-volume novel) as well as the dialogic connections to the surrounding utterances. For Butler, on the other hand, the responsibility of the speaker is reduced by the previous instances of the use of this word. The speaker is not the author as such for Butler, but he is responsible for repeating the utterance and hence bringing it back into light within certain contexts, and through that exercising the agentive capacity of making it stronger/more traumatic or weaker/decontextualised for future uses.

The concepts outlined above inform Coupland's model of speech analysis, providing the necessary toolbox for a sociolinguistic theory to move beyond the linear models of the past. In his theory, Coupland proposes a complex understanding of linguistic variation as a multi-dimensional communicative resource that shows awareness of evaluative dimension of social meanings and can be creatively employed by the speakers for local purposes. Emerging focus on the construction of persona in discourse puts his theory in line with the contemporary sociological and philosophical studies of identity, among which are the highly influential works of Goffman and Butler, overviewed in the Introduction, that foreground the performed nature of speech and deny the existence of 'true self' to be revealed through speech. Adopting the same perspective, Coupland also insists that all speech events that make identity salient are performed. In his sociolinguistic study of Dame's speech in a Welsh Pantomime (2009a), he succeeds in revealing the various identities that are performed (in both the artistic and sociolinguistic sense) through a variety of linguistic devices that draw on a number of cultural and social stereotypes that exist in Welsh society and are linked to its oppressed history. Conceiving of all texts as performed and applying the distinction between low and high performances, helps to eliminate the dividing gap between research into the 'natural' first-hand speech and the constructed language of pre-scripted performance, creating a new area for application of 'critical, context-sensitive, ideology-sensitive and mainly qualitative' (Coupland 2009b: 286) sociolinguistic analytical models.

Having discussed in this section how the non-standard language varieties can be agentively used by the speakers to construct their preferred identity or position themselves in relation to their interlocutors, it is now necessary to turn to the other important determinant of the social reading of non-standardness in speech. Coupland suggests that 'dialect style should be treated, analytically, as a repository of cultural indices, mediated by individual performance' (2001: 202) and it is those 'cultural indices', reflected in the speech of individuals, that remain to be discussed in the following subsection. The use of non-standard language

varieties of the Russian language, especially so in the case of slang, argot and obscenities, has undergone dramatic changes over the past two decades that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, attracting heightened levels of attention and causing heated debates. These developments, which managed to breach the previously highly codified and stratified system of the Russian literary language, as well as their saliency in the cultural and social life of the given language community, need to be taken into account in order to construct the truthful context of the individual uses of these lexical items.

### **Section 3. The use of non-standard language in the public media of post-Soviet Russia**

The following discussion focuses on the late Soviet and post-Soviet changes to the established practices of language use, providing the context for further analysis of the linguistic elements as used in the films of the 1990s. It is appropriate to start by mentioning that a certain democratisation of language use in the public media over the last few decades of the 20th century was a characteristic trait of language development in many of the countries with a standardised national language. Thus, Fairclough, basing his discussion on the English language in the UK, notes two tendencies that have characterised the language of the public affairs media in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century: the tendency to become increasingly conversationalized and the tendency to move increasingly in the direction of entertainment (1995: 10). He draws on Abercrombie's theory (1991) that suggests that the shift of emphasis from the producer to the consumer has caused the shift in social relations in favour of ordinary people and their practices, culture, values, including conversational language. In terms of the public media this implied that the authority was no longer with the producers, but with the consumers of the media product, the audience, whose language patterns hence gained significance and were given representation. Fairclough furthers the argument by drawing attention to the ambivalence of the nature of conversationalization: while it surely reflects a degree of cultural democratisation, it can also be used for ideological reasons – in Fowler's words, 'to naturalize the terms in which reality is represented' (1991:57). What should be noted, though, with respect to both sides, is the controlled nature of popular representation. The voice of the audience, as it emerges from the Fairclough's conception, does not enter the media spontaneously, but is allowed increased participation in so far as it fits the market requirements.

Without losing sight of the wider context, which includes the tendencies outlined by Fairclough, it is necessary to consider post-Soviet Russian language as a separate case. Two aspects distinguish recent developments in the Russian language: one of them concerns the rigidity of the language standard established in the Soviet era, the ideological underpinning of which has been emphasised in section 1, the second aspect is the swiftness of the social and political changes that have prompted the process of language liberalisation. It is the latter aspect that comes to fore in the following section, where the socio-cultural conditions which determined the increase in the non-standard usage are brought to light. It further overviews the metalinguistic discussions of non-standard, emphasising the prominent role it has acquired in the linguistic community, and finally rounds up with brief profiles of each of the

lexical groups that are to be explored in further discussions, providing information on their conceptualisation, linguistic characteristics, socio-cultural position and changes to their use in the post-Soviet times.

### **3.1. Landslide of the norm: the processes of language change in post-Soviet Russia**

As explained in section 1, in the Soviet times the use of language in the public sphere was not only subject to contents censorship but was also produced under strict guidelines with regards to its form. While the highest symbolic value was attributed to the literary language, certain social dialects (and their speakers) were stigmatised. Conceiving of language as hierarchy, with some of the levels deemed unacceptable and punishable due to the social groups they were attributed to, led to the orientation towards linguistic homogeneity. Choosing to stay on the safe side, language producers eschewed linguistic variation.

The late 1980s saw the elimination of formal, as well as ideological barriers to linguistic heterogeneity, and it is therefore unsurprising that the public use of language that had previously been constrained, has literally exploded with a wide range of language varieties. This shift in linguistic orientation from the 'high' to the 'low' is similar in nature to the one Abercrombie observes in Britain. He notes that the rise of consumers' values is in essence anti-authorial and it constitutes 'a change from social organization dominated by a relatively small and well-structured group of producers to one consisting of a more diffuse and much larger assembly of consumers' (Abercrombie 1991: 173). In case of Russia, it is worthwhile to remember, such rebellion against the authority had a powerful political underpinning. The changeover of political systems brought about a new system of values. Quite often what was attributed positive value in the Soviet times was automatically condemned as negative after 1991. Similarly, language development of that period was dominated by the trends that could be considered 'if not as a kind of linguistic revolt against the clichéd and tightly controlled language of the Soviet state, then at least as an alternative source of linguistic authority to fill the void created by that language's wholesale de-legitimation' (Gorham 2006: 19-20).

This 'de-legitimation' of former values and their reformulation, a process similar to that of the early Soviet period, was happening under very different conditions of information dissemination. People of the 1990s, as opposed to their post-Revolutionary counterparts, had at their disposal such powerful means of communication as newspapers, radio and, most importantly, television which ensured instantaneous spread of ideas. The readers, listeners and viewers of these media have soon become increasingly involved in their production

(Zemskaja 2000: 12), breaking the conventions of Soviet media production and contributing to the establishment of a new order of information sharing – that in a form of a dialogue rather than monologue.

Mass media of all types can be considered as the key aspect in the language change of the 1990s. If in the post-Revolution period the major role was played by the introduction of previously illiterate people to the use of literary language through education (Krysin 1989: 38), in the post-Soviet time it was the opening up of channels of mass communication to ordinary people that has had significant influence on the language development (Zemskaja 2000: 12). When identifying main trends in the contemporary language, Zemskaja names several points that deal with communicative function of language and the rise of its importance in the realm of public use, such as the strengthening of the personal aspect in public speech, shift towards more dialogic nature and spontaneity, blurring of the previously distinct boundaries separating unofficial private and official public communication (*ibid*). Main contributors to these changes are thought to be the abolishment of censorship (including self-censorship), introduction and development of new situations and genres of public speech, involvement of wide public with the work of mass media (*ibid*). Outside of the field of mass communication, Zemskaja also names several linguistic trends that stem from the public rejection of the Soviet language conventions and restraints. Post-Soviet time has come to see aversion towards former models of speech resulting in the need to invent new ones, with the value placed on the novelty and creativity (*ibid*: 14).

The emphasis on the personal, dialogic and spontaneous aspects of speech enhanced by rejection of the previously established models, found realisation in linguistic features characteristic of post-Soviet era such as stylistic mixing and wide spread of non-standard linguistic elements within public speech. Kakorina links this to the intensification of functional mobility of linguistic units (2000: 67) and quotes Shveitser on the two directions this process can take – vertical (from the sociolects to the literary language), and horizontal (from peripheral zones of language system to its centre) (1993: 54 in Kakorina 2000: 67). From this she concludes that these processes can not only introduce greater variability within the norm, but also lead to the rejection of some parts of the established norm in favour of 'non-normative'. Another explanation is suggested by Zemskaja, who makes distinction between the language system, language ability and texts (2000: 17). She claims that the perceived 'incorrectness' of texts is determined by the speakers' lack of language ability due to the changes in the conditions of language functioning and the emphasis on spontaneity,

whereas the language system in itself, albeit undergoing significant changes, is far from being corrupted (ibid: 18).

In another account of the early post-Soviet language, the orientation towards combination of heterogeneous elements resulting in stylistic mixing, the merging of what had previously been considered 'normative' and 'non-normative' has been linked to the shift in 'language taste'. Kostomarov analyses how in an attempt to get away from the 'newspeak' (bureaucratic language) of the Soviet times, journalists and politicians have noticeably altered their linguistic behaviour, distancing themselves from the Soviet conventions of public speech by adopting 'fundamental direction for mixing, combination, coupling of any language units, for ultimate heterogeneity of the verbal form of communication, of every single text' (1994: 45). In contrast to the perceived rigidity of literary language, non-standard language varieties have gained the value of 'freshness, sincerity, expression' (ibid: 80).

Increase in the use of non-standard elements was characteristic not only of the language of the media, but also, ironically, of the language of literature. This trend started in the 1980s and found its most notable realisations in the works of V. Sorokin and V. Pelevin.<sup>15</sup> Abundant use of obscene and slang vocabulary in their novels takes the heterogeneous linguistic realities of the late 1980s-1990s to the extreme, however, even outside the extreme cases, 'the peculiarity of the interplay between literary language – vernacular – jargon at the close of the 1990s can be said to be the intensity of this interaction, as well as the advancement of new centres of expansion – such as the lower urban culture, youth counter-culture, criminal subculture' (Kakorina 2000: 79).

Acknowledging the increased presence of non-standard elements in the post-Soviet language usage, many of the linguists whose views were presented above did not manage to escape the influence of the hegemonic perspective dominant in the preceding decades. Continuing to conceive of the literary language as the 'correct' one and of the influx of non-standard elements as damaging to the language, they have been working in the tradition of language culture, discussed in section 1.4. What is important, though, is that the fast-growing body of (pseudo-)academic works on non-standard language varieties, on the one hand, and numerous debates regarding the acceptability of these language strata both within academia

---

<sup>15</sup> For more on the language of post-Soviet literature, see e.g. Lunde, Uffelmann, Paulsen in Lunde 2006.

and among lay people, on the other, point to the increasing prominence of non-standard elements as means of linguistic expression of the post-Soviet society.

It is not the point of this research to concentrate on the metalinguistic debates surrounding the use of non-standard elements in public speech, but the scale of interest towards these issues is so significant in modern-day Russia that it would be impossible not to mention it. First of all, it is important to note the level of personal involvement characteristic of these debates, which makes it impossible to regard linguistic versus lay opinions as a dichotomy. Regarding it instead as a continuum caters for the situation in which the same people who publish serious linguistic works can also be known to express more emotional and at times judgemental views on the topic under other circumstances. As suggested by Krongauz, 'attitude towards one's native tongue cannot be exclusively professional simply because language is part of us all and everything that happens to it concerns us personally' (2008: 8). Strictly linguistic works, those that are drawn upon in my study, would then be placed on the one side of the continuum. Passionate personal judgements of non-linguists would then be on the other side. What lies in between is a whole range of popular linguistic books (not necessarily written by linguists), journalist articles, political statements about language etc.

Forums for the expression of all these levels of attitude are numerous in modern Russia and range from state-owned websites like *gramota.ru* to radio programmes *Говорим по-русски* ('Speaking Russian', aired on *Ekho Moskvy*), *Как это по-русски* ('How to say it in Russian', aired on *Radio Rossii*) and various discussions in newspapers, on journalistic and private websites and blogs. The recurrent topics of these discussions are the issues of over-abundance of loan words (mainly Anglicisms), non-standard and vernacular elements in public speech. Another aspect of these debates that has to be mentioned is its rigorous encouragement if not to say sanctioning by the government. From the beginning of the noughties, with the introduction of policy of *ukreplenie vlasti* (consolidation of power) by Putin, literary language has been re-attributed symbolic value and attempts have been made to reinforce the 'correct' usage. One of the major realisations of Putin's policy in this area was the adoption of the *Law on the State Language of the Russian Federation* in June 2005, which stated that Russian language is to be considered the state language of the Russian Federation and when used as the state language it cannot include any words and expressions 'that do not comply with the norms of contemporary Russian literary language, with the exception of loanwords that do not have widely used equivalents in the Russian language' (LSL-2005, Article 1.6: online). This rather controversial (and difficult to implement) law is an important sign of the beginning of a new stage in governmental involvement with

linguistic matters which sees fresh attempts of the State to employ the literary language in their fight for the consolidation of power. The law, on the one hand, reinstates literary language with political prestige and, on the other, attempts to establish the language control through the narrative of language cultivation (Ryazanova-Clarke 2006: 49).

The other aspect of the metalinguistic discourse indicative of the changing linguistic reality is the growing body of works on the non-literary language varieties. With the elimination of censorship and collapse of the Soviet Union the possibility for publication of works focusing on the previously disregarded language varieties were taken up quite rapidly. Most of the works referred to in the following section come from this period, however, and possibly unsurprisingly, not all of the works on non-literary language published in the post-Soviet period showed linguistic expertise of the authors. As shown in the overview of the existing dictionaries of obscenities prefacing Plutser-Sarno's *Big Dictionary of Mat*,<sup>16</sup> of over than ten dictionaries of obscene vocabulary published in the preceding 30 years, most have 'more to do with pornography than with lexicography' (Plutser-Sarno 2005: 49). What is curious about this situation is the motivation of the publishers to invest in these multiple pseudo-linguistic works. The explanation may lie in their orientation towards wide public rather than narrow linguistic community, and hence the belief that taking up the unprecedented opportunity to put the word *mat* on the book cover can ensure its commercial success. This legitimisation and rise towards 'publishable' and 'printable' status is most striking in, but not unique to, obscene language, however, it is equally characteristic of urban or youth slang and criminal argot.

### **3.2. Non-standard language varieties in post-Soviet Russia**

Increase in the use of non-standard lexis in the post-Soviet times has provoked strong reactions and heated debates. However, those opponents of public use of non-standard elements who believe them to be damaging to standard language and symptomatic of the criminalised / permissive / vulgar trends discernible in the society on the whole, fail to note that expansion of spheres of their application lead to changes in perceived connotations. What I see as pertinent here is to look more closely at those non-standard language varieties that constitute the focus of my research with regards to socio-historic development of their

---

<sup>16</sup> *Mat*– the strongest layer of the Russian obscenities.

lexis, functions associated with their conventional use and connotations that can be drawn on when employed outside the usual context. This, I believe, will help to shift the focus away from the predetermined connections towards the individual speaker motivation, positioning these language variants as communicative resource that holds a multitude of potential meanings, of which the speakers can choose to activate those that correspond to their communicative goals.

### **3.2.1. Criminal argot**

The term *apzo* (*argot*) has been used in Russia with reference to the language of the criminal and déclassé social groups from the 1860s. This term derives from the French word *ergot*, meaning 'spur of a cock', referring to the item that French outlaws used to tie to their belts in order to be recognised by their likes (Grachev 2005: 17). Two aspects of the original meaning were preserved in the word *argot* as used with reference to a language variety: first, its tight connection to the people of the underworld; second, the importance of the secret, or cryptolectic, function of such language varieties. Hence, Ushakov defines argot as a 'peculiar, conventional language of an isolated social group, profession, community, circle of people etc., different from the common language by the inclusion of words, unknown to the uninitiated' (1935-40:online). This definition, dating from the Stalinist times, avoids open reference to the criminal subgroups of the society, the sheer existence of which was then proclaimed the thing of the past. Grachev's post-Soviet definition brings these 'isolated social groups' back into focus, defining argot as the 'lexis of criminals, beggars, rogues, homeless, tramps etc' (2005: 5).

Cryptolectic function of argot was historically realised in the Russian milieu in such argot varieties as that of *офени* (vagrant traders), card-players and thieves. Changing socio-cultural conditions of the XX century caused some scholars to suggest extinction of many types of argot (e.g. Skvortsov 1964, Bondaletov 1969). Elistratov, however, convincingly argues that despite the extinction of a number of trades and social grounds for existence of certain social groups, the vocabulary that had been used by them has not been lost. He advances that it was partially adopted by the contemporary counterparts (modern beggars, prostitutes, car thieves etc), who developed the meanings to suit the changing conditions. Most importantly, though, the 'hermetic' period, that corresponded to the pre-Revolutionary functioning of argot, made way to the next stage of its development - that of its 'opening' (Elistratov 2007: 619). The social changes of the early Soviet period initiated the gradual loss of cryptolectic function and created conditions for wider dissemination of argot lexis. As suggested by Krysin, in the pre-Revolution times argot had a well-delineated circle of users,

it was in essence the jargon of the *déclassés* (Krysin 1989: 73). This has later been made known to a much wider and more heterogeneous group of speakers by virtue of the socio-political conditions and mass repressions of the Stalinist times that determined interaction and coexistence of the criminal groups, the original speakers of *блатная феня*,<sup>17</sup> with non-criminal groups of society (Elistratov 2007: 649): former engineers, artists, doctors, journalists, students, party officials, soldiers etc. This produced double effect: on the one hand, it created favourable conditions for the consolidation of geographically and occupationally specialised argots into one, *общеуголовный жаргон*, or common language of criminals. On the other, it led to the wide spread of it in the non-criminal parts of society - among those who had been in the prison camps, including writers that have further contributed to dissemination and even romantization of this language stratum by using it to describe everyday realities of life in prisons and prison camps of the Soviet times (e.g. Solzhenitsyn).

The process of 'opening up' of argot into the normative language is therefore not peculiar to the post-Soviet period, but can be seen as the next stage of the process initiated by the social reshuffle of the Soviet period. The significant change in the post-Soviet era was constituted by the process of stylistic mixing which carried argot from the periphery of the language system, which it had entered in the preceding period, to the core – that of the realm of use of the strictly codified literary language. Mixing argot with the literary language became common practice in public speech (e.g. speeches of politicians, newspaper articles, TV broadcasts) and led some researchers to link it to the growing role of criminal subgroups of the society (e.g. Kakorina 2000: 84).

The spread of the jargon of Russian mafia, or *братки*, can be given as a glaring example of how the language of a criminal subgroup has been called for due to the changes in the social setup. Although the strengthening of the organised criminal groups is not a phenomenon new to the 1990s, it has certainly become more visible in the first post-Soviet decade both in real life and in the public media. Grachev names four major functions of argot: cryptolectic, nominative, identificational and worldview-marking (2005: 130), of which the nominative function is the one that will most obviously lead to the adoption of argot items by the normative language under the circumstances when criminal realities are to be represented in

---

<sup>17</sup> *Блатная феня (музыка)* is an argot term for criminal argot, also used in colloquial speech and mass media.

the public media. As other trade jargons, argot is very economic in lexical representation of common objects, actions, events. Although it would not be impossible to find a literary explanation of such terms (e.g. *разборка* = meeting between two criminal groups with the purpose of settling a dispute), the use of one-word terms makes it appealing for the non-criminal use when the references to such criminal events are to be made frequently, e.g. in the public media. Hence, a number of 'mafia' words were adopted in public use for the initial purpose of referring to such topics as criminal profit-making, clashes of interests between the mafia groups and contractual killing. Among the words that can be attributed to the language of *братки* are such widely used words as *беспредел* (~ chaos, lawlessness), *разборка* (~ showdown),<sup>18</sup> the meanings of which have subsequently been widened to allow for non-criminal application, e.g. to political and social realities of post-Soviet times.

It may be concluded that in the post-Soviet times there were two major sources of lexical influx from argot – that from the *тюремно-лагерный жаргон* (prison camp jargon) and the argot of *братки*. Although many of the words were introduced in their nominative function in reference to the criminal world, some have soon developed meanings more general than of their argot cognates. Given such socio-cultural context, it would be too simplistic to reduce the use of criminal argot in the post-Soviet language to its narrow group-identificational function. Following Coupland's model, I suggest to look more broadly at the lexical choice that is made by individual speakers / film characters, focusing on argot's connotations of strength, power and authority that may determine the use of criminal argot items in speech of non-criminals, e.g. when argot items are employed to make the speech sound more 'rough, vulgar, dashing, cynical' (Likhachev 1964 in Kostomarov 1994: 61), to create the effect of irony, or with the goal of subverting the (criminal) authority.

### **3.2.2. Youth slang**

Youth slang can be defined as a language variety, 'used by people of 14 to 25 years old in informal communication with their peers' (Uzdinskaia 1991). Apart from the age, some researchers also specify the educational level of speakers: hence, Krysin suggests to limit slang usage to the speech of high-school pupils, university students, young working population and intelligentsia (1989: 76), while Beregovskaia insists that youth slang is the linguistic characteristic of a rather well-educated part of the young population (1996: 40). Some also emphasise the link between slang usage and urban lifestyle. Nevertheless, age

---

<sup>18</sup> For further discussion of their use, see Kakorina 2000: 81-84, Kostomarov 1994: 74-76.

remains the most determinant characteristic, and rather narrow age-range of users explains the fluid nature of youth slang. Skvortsov points out that even after a year or two some of the lexical elements can become outdated and are subsequently pushed out of active usage by new creations (1964: 50). On the other hand, due to the limited period of time that most speakers actively participate in the slang usage (for most people that would be limited to their school and university years), outdated slang items can be preserved in the speech of older generations, and be later re-introduced into slang. This is what Skvortsov calls the 'depository' of slang that is kept for the following generations (ibid: 49). The co-existence of the mobile and stable features determine the eclectic character of youth culture and youth slang. According to Elistratov, they never present a complete and monolithic structure (2007: 650).

The fluid nature of youth slang does not lie only in the temporal dimension. Unlike criminal argot, slang does not have a propensity towards closeness, and is therefore constantly open to influence from a variety of sources. Although the replenishment of the slang vocabulary, as pointed out by Beregovskaia, happens through the same mechanisms and from the same sources as that of the standard language, there is a significant difference in the dominant trends (1996: 33). She follows on to list the most productive methods of word-formation: foreign loans, affixation of the native-language roots, metaphorisation and loans from the criminal argot. Important thing to note here is that loans rarely enter slang usage in their original meaning, but are prone to revision and alteration that match them more closely to the specific realities of youth subculture. For example, the word *тусовка* originated in the argot of card-sharpers in the meaning of 'card distribution', it has later entered the common criminal argot in the meaning of 'organisational meeting of criminals', finally making its way into the youth slang with the meaning of 'place, where young people get together for entertainment' (Grachev 2005: 115).

Being so prone to change, slang often reflects major political and cultural centres of influence, rendering it unsurprising that for the most part of the 20th century Russian slang loans were coming predominantly from English (Beregovskaia 1996: 33). Hence, high numbers of English loans in the slang of *стиляги* of the 1950s represented fascination with jazz music and American culture, whereas hippy and rock movements of the 1970-80s adapted the corresponding Anglo-American vocabulary. Similarly, post-Soviet generation showed growing interest towards the world of high technologies, introducing increasing numbers of computer-related loans into their every-day language. Rapid development of high technologies over the past two decades determined the rapprochement of technical

jargon and youth slang in the areas dealing with computers, due to young people creating the most numerous group of users, as well as of IT-professionals. This overlap between the speakers of youth slang and of IT-jargon caused the mutual influence on the word-formation. The patterns of word-formation usual for slang can be traced in many IT-related words. For example, phonetic mimicry produced such words as *аська* (the word used for the chat software ICQ, phonetically resembling the Russian female name Asja), *мыло* (onomatopoeic colloquial term for e-mail, also Russian for soap) etc.

The examples given above also illustrate orientation of slang towards expressivity. Among the dominant features of youth slang Beregovskaia names its 'inflamed metaphoricity' and 'ludic orientation' (1996: 40), both of which foreground its creative and playful nature. Slang users tend to play with both the form (e.g. through affixation, phonetic mimicry) and the content (e.g. play on words, metaphorisation) of their speech, thus questioning and humouring the established norms of standard language and, by proxy, the rigidity of social institutions, transposing the informal register associated with slang use onto the subjects of their speech.

The ludic orientation of slang was taken to its extreme in the peculiar phenomenon of the Russian internet language of the early noughties – the language of *падошки*. It was characterised by intentional distortion of orthography that brought the graphic form of the word closer to its pronunciation, play on words, simplified register and declarative denunciation of literacy as a repressive form (Zvereva 2009: 49). Although not necessarily a youth phenomenon (the users of this language have been known to come from different backgrounds and age groups), it certainly adopts the emphasis on playfulness, creativity and depreciation of the norms typical of youth slang, and exemplifies the importance of ludic function in various types of communication in post-Soviet Russia.

Wide application of slang patterns in the linguistic use of post-Soviet Russia can be linked to the ability of youth slang to cross-cut the society. Elistratov comments on the frequent equation of youth slang with urban slang in general and concludes that this has its rational basis, since young people constitute the most mobile and eager to experiment part of the urban society (2007: 650). In the post-Soviet time the changing socio-political realities determined the active and visible position of young people in the life of the country, as they were the first to adjust to the challenges that the new order has posed to the population. The spread of slang vocabulary into the domains of formal communication, like the mass media, was also determined by its inherent orientation against the established norms and social institutions, and towards the creation of humorous and ironic effects, that were often drawn

upon to represent widespread social sentiments. This has taken the youth slang out of its narrow limits of informal communication between young people into the wider language use, turning it into a linguistic tool of creating the effect of informality, expressivity, depreciation and playfulness.

### 3.2.3. Obscenities

Obscenities constitute a large and internally diverse stratum of language and in order to give a starting point to further discussion, it is necessary to attempt to define its limits. One of the existing definitions states that 'obscene vocabulary consists of the rudest vulgar expressions, used by the speakers in reaction to unexpected and unpleasant situations' (Encyklopedia jazykovedy 1993 in Mokienko 1994: online). However, within these limits, it is also possible to distinguish further lexical subunits, of which in the context of the Russian language it seems most important to single out the following two: insults and *mat*. The difference between insults and *mat*, as well as their significant overlap, is determined by their topical orientation and functional potential. *Mat*, in the definition of Plutser-Sarno, concerns itself primarily with the humans' sexuality (2005: 78), whereas insults can draw upon much wider variety of topics. From the functional point of view, however, it is the insults that have a narrower focus. Zhel'vis talks of the insults as 'verbal aggression' (1997: 11), whereas for *mat* aggression is just one of the functions, others including parody, jocular play on words, or even word substitution (Plutser-Sarno 2005: 79). It is necessary to note here that insults not only overlap with *mat* within the layer of obscenities, but also provide a point of contact between obscene and general colloquial vocabulary, as insults do not necessarily have to be obscene.<sup>19</sup> This determines the ambiguous situation in which it is not always possible to draw a definite line between obscene and 'acceptable', or within the obscene vocabulary between *mat* (that is considered to be the strongest of obscene lexical groups) and non-*mat*.

When trying to give a general definition of obscenities, it is also important to take into consideration their cultural specificity. Whether or not certain word is considered to be an obscenity, Plutser-Sarno advances, 'is a question of perception of certain words by native speakers' (2005: 77). For example, *mat* is normally limited to the words derived from a small number of roots and united by their reference to procreativity. This in itself is realisation of a

---

<sup>19</sup> Zhel'vis suggests the existence of an invective continuum, with words that are commonly known but condemned in most subgroups of the society, on the one side of the continuum (e.g. Russian *Хуй!*), and words that are deemed acceptable within certain speech situations (e.g. Russian *Гынеу!*), on the other. (Zhel'vis 1997: 10).

culture-specific and historically shaped tradition existing in the Russian milieu, whereas in Greek, as observed by Zhel'vis, the strongest layer of obscenities is constituted by blasphemies, in Japanese by references to defecation, in Arabic by references to deviation from the standard sexual behaviour (e.g. homosexuality, prostitution) (1997: 157). Hence, in these cultural milieus the reference to procreative function, albeit breaking certain social taboo, would not be considered as strong as in the Russian language. This is why Plutser-Sarno concludes his article *On the semantics of the word mat* by stating that '*mat* is what we call *mat*, what we perceive as *mat*' (2005: 80).

The cultural specificity of obscenities not only relates to their conceptualisation, but also to the place they occupy in the cultural system. In Russia, as Krongauz points out, swearing is a 'subject of special national pride, a national idea of a certain kind' (2008: 158). It would be too ambitious to try to establish the place of obscenities (especially *mat*) in the Russian culture, and yet it is important to note the omnipresent admiration expressed by the country's population for this language stratum. This is linked not so much with the circumstances in which the use of strong language is deemed acceptable or, in extreme cases, compulsory (e.g. army, especially in the war conditions where it serves the cathartic function of giving the speaker psychological relief (Zhel'vis 1997: 100)), but with the expressive possibilities provided by obscene vocabulary. Many of the Russian classical writers are reported to have braved their mastery of this stratum of language. For example, Kovalev refers to the unique talent of Bunin, who has not only used obscenities lavishly in his speech, but also compiled his own dictionary of *mat* and presented it to the Russian Academy of Sciences when he was awarded the title of the honorary member of the Academy (Kovalev 2004: online). Reading the memoirs of classical writers' contemporaries, it is possible to come across such definitions of their use of *mat* as *виртуозно* (masterly), *гениально* (ingeniously), *бесподобно* (incomparably), *свободно* (freely). It is the presence of this artistic function of *mat* among the list of its uses that determines the commonality of appeal of obscene language for all the social groups. This multivalence of Russian *mat* and its affiliation with the language use of different social groups is among the reasons for its special status in the Russian culture.

Although Russian obscene vocabulary has existed for centuries, there have been some significant changes in its usage in the post-Soviet era. These changes concern first and foremost the appearance of such lexis in public speech and in print, the situation in which the "unprintable" word became printable' (Koester-Thoma 1993: online). This can be linked to one of the characteristic features of obscene vocabulary, identified by Levin: its similarity to

performatives. As Levin suggests, obscenities are akin to performatives in that their emphasis is not on illocutionary force of the statement, but on the act of verbal breaking of the taboo (1986: 61-62). In the post-Soviet times marked by the ideological distancing from the Soviet past, the use of obscenities in situations where it would have been deemed impossible previously served the function of liberation from the past.

Zvereva notes that: 'in the Russian culture of the 1990s one could witness de-tabooisation of substandard lexis: *mat* was used in literature, song lyrics, tabloids as an expressive, 'free' language. It was used for humouring various politicized forms of culture, for parodying the discourse of power, and as a reaction to the rigid delineation of the corpus of classical literature' (2009: 51). Condemned by many language purists as being damaging for the language, public use of obscenities was rather understandable from the psychological point of view. On the other hand, however, rapid increase in obscene usage has been considered a threat to the existence of the obscenities themselves. What lies at the core of obscene usage is the existence of social taboos on certain topics and language types associated with them. Regular performative breaking of the taboo weakens the taboo itself, and henceforth, as Krongauz warns, 'the sacrament of taboo disappears, leaving rudeness and vulgarity' (2008: 160). The discussion of contemporary Russian use of obscenities, therefore, has to take into consideration that the liberalisation of language in the 1990s extended the functions of obscene lexis to include its performative use as a symbol of democracy and freedom in language. In some fields of application, extended use of obscenities contributed to the weakening of associated taboos, with further use of obscenities becoming the stylistic requirement of the medium.

## Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the existent approaches to the study of non-standard language varieties. First, it showed how socio-political conditions of the early Soviet years determined the orientation of Soviet linguistics towards rigid standardisation of language. Vested with symbolic value, the literary language came to be identified with the preferred linguistic realisations of the language system. Although sharing with the general concept of standard language strong orientation towards normativity, the literary language differs from it in the understanding of sources of these norms. Strong focus of literary language on the language of literature, language as used by the 'authorities' (classical writers, grammarians, politicians) distanced it from speakers and conceptualised it as an unobtainable ideal. With the literary language conceptualised as the superior language variety, all non-literary varieties were consequently marginalised and attributed inferior status. Academic perspectives on non-standardness emanated predominantly from the fields of stylistics and language culture. In stylistics, the devised system of functional styles took into account the use of non-literary language varieties, albeit emphasising that they constitute functionally limited and stylistically restricted speech varieties. Language culture, however, did not allow for any deviations from the literary language norms, often passing moral judgements on the users of non-literary varieties and connecting such usage with realisation of deeper social problems. Language cultural pronouncements stood in line with the ideology of standardisation and hence were attributed special prominence, which made it hard for sociolinguistic researchers to rid certain lexical groups of ideological bias that linked them to 'deficient' social groups. Furthermore, acceptability of non-literary language varieties was regarded not as a uniform notion, but as a continuum, where some of the non-literary varieties were considered more acceptable and some less so. This continuum of acceptability found its material realisation through censorship choices that determined the acceptable content of printed and filmed materials.

Having established the main tenets of traditional Soviet conceptualisation, this chapter then contrasted them to Western sociolinguistic approaches to the study of non-standard language varieties. It showed how Labov's innovative research of the 1960s managed to break through the biased attitudes towards the dialectal forms and set the frame for further studies on the premises of the equality of standard and non-standard language variants in terms of their linguistic value. He was also the first to raise the issue of style as a determinant of language variation. Since then style has evolved into being one of the major foci of post-Labovian sociolinguistic research, and style-shifting has been the central concern of such influential

theories as accommodation theory and audience design. Further developments to the sociolinguistic approach to language variation were introduced by Coupland, who shifted the focus from the audience to the speakers themselves and emphasised their agentive capacity to shift the speech-style as required for the achievement of communicative purposes. Coupland's theory revolves round the issues of identity performance and is therefore intricately linked to the constructionist conceptualisation of identity as a fluid concept, which does not correspond to a pre-existent entity, but is constructed and potentially re-negotiated in talk. Taking Coupland's conceptualisation of language variation as a communicative resource for the construction and negotiation of identity as the basis for the following study, in the concluding section I have turned to the socio-historic context of language use in the early post-Soviet period.

Socio-political changes linked to the collapse of the Soviet Union triggered a rapid shift from the formal to the more colloquial register. It was especially noticeable in public speech, mass media and literature, all of which were subject to strict censorship in the Soviet years. Elimination of censorship in the late 1980s opened opportunities to introduce topics that had previously been banned from public discussions – e.g. criminality, youth subcultures, drug use, sexuality etc., introducing into the public sphere language varieties that had previously been restricted to informal use within narrow social groups. At the same time, non-standard language varieties gained prominence in the public sphere as a symbol of liberation from the rigid linguistic requirements of the Soviet times. The jocular, depreciative, familiar effect created by the use of argot, slang, obscene lexis was drawn upon to reflect widespread social sentiments.

Increase in the use of non-standard vocabulary has drawn attention to these language varieties as much in the academic world as among politicians and lay people. Among the reasons that were advanced for this phenomenon, were the communicative incompetence of those participating in public speech events, changes in the framework of mass communication, elimination of censorship, aversion towards the Soviet 'newspeak' and search for new creative ways of expression. What can often be traced in these discussions is the dogmatic association of the literary language with 'correctness', thus opposing it to the new developments in the language that are often reduced to being 'corrupt' and 'deficient', failing to recognise the changes that the argot, slang, obscene vocabulary underwent in terms of functions and connotations following increase in its usage. The chapter rounded up with exploration of the socio-historic nature of Russian argot, slang and obscenities and tried to shed light on how the original functions (e.g. group-identificational, worldview-marking,

cryptolectic) have given way to broader applications that made agentive use of the meaning potential of these items.

What follows is that the process of language standardisation undergone by the Russian language resulted in a conceptualisation of non-standard varieties as inferior to the language standard. Linguistic approaches to the study of language variation in Russia are still being influenced by this traditional bias, and therefore fail to account for the recent functional (and not just purely quantitative) developments in the use of socially marked varieties, such as slang, argot and obscenities. Conceiving of language variation instead as a communicative resource for identity construction, Coupland's approach provides a model of analysis that is less prone to judgemental pronouncements and more suitable for conducting socio-culturally sensitive research. The next chapter will thus explore further the possibilities for the application of this method to research in the Russian language and expand on the relevant methodological tools, including its relevance to the study of the constructed language of film.

## Chapter 2. Sociolinguistic method in the study of film dialogue

### Introduction

The previous chapter outlined traditional approaches to the study of non-standard varieties in the Russian milieu, bringing to attention their ideological underpinnings. It established that Russian was conceptualised in terms of a rigid hierarchy of language varieties with 'literary' language positioned at the top and non-standard varieties conceptualised as inferior to it. This has not only enabled us to reveal the ideologically-charged thrust of the scholarly investigations, but also outlined the framework of attitudes which informed the language usage of the time. Essentialized connections between the standard language and the educated, as well as between non-standard language varieties and marginalised social groups constitute the structural dimension of language use. Under the conditions of the changing linguistic landscape in Russia of the 1990s, enhanced by elimination of censorship and a variety of other contributing factors, deviations from the language standard became a salient feature. Such non-standard language varieties as slang, argot and obscenities have shown rapid increase in use, with their functions extending well beyond the narrow social group application. This agentive dimension has gained increased visibility also because of the wide use of non-standard language in the public media, including films, where it was employed not only for the purposes of characterisation, but also to provide a realistic representation of the complexities, controversies, mishaps, 'peculiarities' of the early post-Soviet Russian life.

An overview of the developments in the cinema of the 1990s will be presented in Chapter 3, for the moment it just needs to be noted that 'after the collapse of an all-powerful ideology which defined nationhood and identity, which created myths of a bright future and rewrote the past, and which invented moral standards at the expense of religion, Russia [sought] to redefine its identity, its values and its history' (Beumers 1999: 4). Films of the early post-Soviet time thus often focused on the characters' search for identity, representing their effective displacement between a variety of lifestyles. The linguistic construction of social stereotypes, as well as representation of interpersonal (or even intrapersonal) dynamics was realised not least through such non-standard types of lexis as slang, argot and obscenities. By focusing on the interplay between structured and agentive dimensions of their use, the following analysis aims to investigate the way Russian identity was portrayed, negotiated and re-defined in films of the post-Soviet period.

Conditions of language change and social need for identity (re)definition constitute the frame in which the analysis of language variation employed in films will be conducted. As was outlined in the previous chapter, the tenets formulated within traditional Soviet linguistics still influence the approaches to research into non-standard varieties of Russian language. Unlike in Western sociolinguistics of the past few decades, agentive use of language variation in the public media of the post-Soviet times has often been approached from the same ideologically-charged positions. As such, Kostomarov's study on the language of mass media (1994) takes a highly reprehensive approach to the increase in the 'stylistic mixing' in the newspapers of the early 1990s. Similarly, Krongauz's book entitled *Русский язык на грани нервного срыва* (*Russian language on the brink of a nervous breakdown*, 2008) ridicules abundant use of loanwords, colloquialisms, obscenities, etc. in the public speech of the day. This thesis proposes to shift the focus away from such association of non-standard language with speakers' insufficient linguistic competency and onto its identity construction values through the study of its use within the context of film discourse. Language variation will thus be approached as a stylistic device employed by filmmakers and considered in terms of how the social connections evoked by the use of certain types of lexis were recontextualised for the purpose of characterisation. As already mentioned in Chapter 1 (2.3), Coupland's theory of style (2007) is of special significance in this respect. Together with contributions by Bauman, Rampton, Bucholtz, etc., it allows for a productive application of sociolinguistic models to the ideologically sensitive study of language. Drawing on the social constructionist view of identity, Coupland's model emphasises agentive, creative and purposeful use of language. It posits that social configurations and discourses constitute the socio-cultural context which informs the use of language varieties, while also providing tools to account for those instances when they are being agentively negotiated and even subverted.

This chapter is set to expand on the methodological framework and outline the design of the following study. Believing, after Coupland, that language is best approached as a repository of linguistic devices that can be employed for local purposes by the users, I am extending this view to the complex meaning-making apparatus of film. It is therefore pertinent to start by discussing in a more focused way the functions of film dialogue, giving an overview of the limited body of work that has dealt with the topic to date. I follow on to suggest the role that language variation can play in character identity construction and narrative development, and bring together the toolkit of sociolinguistic concepts and approaches that will be of particular use in the following study.

## Section 1. Film dialogue

As is universally acknowledged, film's perception hinges on the interplay between a number of channels: visual, textual and auditory. On top of that, these channels do not transmit information consistently and in a linear fashion, but work through a variety of film-specific instruments: cuts, plan exchange, montage, etc. This creates a complex set of interdependent information producing elements, of which language is just one. It is then only understandable, that considerable amount of attention in Film Studies is paid to the technical side of film-making that analyses the role of e.g. light, montage, editing, etc. in the narrative construction. What is regrettable, however, is how disproportionately little research is done into the functions and techniques of language use in films. As commented by Rемаel, 'good film dialogue is appreciated by all, but studied by few. In the hierarchy of film signs and the research into their narrative functioning, film dialogue occupies fourth position at best<sup>20</sup> [...] favouring the promotion of film as a visual art' (2004: 103). And yet, although the visual component may be dominant in films of some genres, in feature films language is instrumental for 'many of the ways in which narrative is communicated, empathy elicited, themes conveyed, visuals interpreted' (Kozloff 2000: 14).

Until recently, researchers have focused on those aspects of film that distinguished it as a 'thing of its own', bypassing the verbal component as if it was 'too transparent, too simple to need study' (ibid: 6). The first comprehensive analysis of film dialogue has not come until as late as 2000. In her groundbreaking study, Kozloff argued for the more methodological study of film dialogue and provided a model for analysis that brought in insights from the field of (often, socio-)linguistics. A number of scholars have followed Kozloff's suit, establishing research into film dialogue as a field of scientific enquiry: cf. Culpeper 2001, Bubel 2008, Quaglio 2008, Richardson 2010, Dynel 2011. As noted by Dynel, though, 'despite the elapsing time [since the publication of Kozloff's work], the literature on the nature of film discourse is still scarce' (2011: 42), and therefore has not yet developed any consolidated method into the study of film dialogue. A significant step towards consolidation of this field of enquiry was provided by publication in May 2012 of a special issue of *Multilingua* that dealt specifically with the sociolinguistics of cinematic discourse. It brought to the fore the recurrent thread of those previous works dealing with film dialogue - the argument for the

---

<sup>20</sup> According to Rемаel, the first three positions are occupied by the study of editing, camera angles and sound in a more general sense.

application of sociolinguistic methods. Despite the first glance differences between the constructed discourse of films and everyday speech, it has often been argued that 'the principles, norms and conventions of use which underlie spontaneous communication in everyday life are precisely those which are exploited and manipulated by dramatists in their constructions of speech types and forms' (Herman 1995: 6). In accordance with this, sociolinguistic methods have been successfully applied to a range of studies on constructed language, including the discourse of film (e.g. Quaglio 2009, Richardson 2010), proving right Dynel's stipulation that film discourse and real-life language can be approached with similar methods for as long as research questions are chosen with care (Dynel 2011: 45).

One of the most important points of Kozloff's discussion regards the functions of dialogue in films, which she places into nine categories, of which the first six are directly involved in the communication of narrative, and the last three are of more aesthetic / pragmatic value:

1. anchorage of the diegesis and characters
2. communication of narrative causality
3. enactment of narrative events
4. character revelation
5. adherence to the code of realism
6. control of viewer evaluation and emotions
7. exploitation of the resources of language
8. thematic messages/authorial commentary/allegory
9. opportunities for "star turns"

(Kozloff 2000: 33-34).

Kozloff's affirmation of the importance of film dialogue due to the way it 'anchors and identifies the place, time, and participants; how it establishes and conveys causal relationships, how it enacts major events [...] how it is used to create and reveal the characters' (ibid: 61), confirms Marcel Pagnol's earlier declaration: 'Any talking film which can be shown silent and remain comprehensible is a very bad talking film' (1983: 91). In the multimodal world of film, language is employed alongside other meaning-making devices and is therefore less omnipotent than in e.g. the novel. And yet, pivotal narrative links are created exactly through language, which therefore is worthy of scholarly attention.

It is now in order to adjust the preceding discussion to the focus of the current study, which regards the use of language variation in character identity construction. In this respect, the distinction between the narrative and aesthetic uses of dialogue, proposed by Kozloff, deserves reconsideration. Kozloff argues that dialogue function can 'go beyond narrative communication into the realm of aesthetic effect, ideological persuasion, and commercial

appeal' (2000: 33). Although it is hardly incorrect to distinguish between a variety of original intentions that cause the selection of certain linguistic devices, it does not add analytical value when the focus is on the film as a finished product, since exploitation of linguistic resources of language for e.g. aesthetic effect will ultimately have to be attributed to a certain character, and that will accordingly modify perception of this character by the audience. Thus, even when driven initially by an aesthetic/ ideological rationale, any marked use of language will have an effect on representation of the character identity and, consequently, on the narrative development. This will undoubtedly be taken into consideration by the filmmaker, thus rendering aesthetic, ideological and commercial grounds for language use secondary to the reasons of character construction and narrative development. In a similar vein, of the six primary narrative functions, two seem to be of particular importance: character revelation and enactment of narrative events. They represent the core functions, with the others being subservient to them.

Character revelation (in Kozloff's terms), or character identity construction, as it will be referred to in this work, is one of the core functions of language use in film dialogue, and the primary focus of current study. As commented by Dyer, 'a character's personality in a film is seldom something given in a single shot. Rather it has to be built up, by film-makers and audience alike, across the whole film' (Dyer 1998: 106). In this respect language varieties can provide a strong instrument in defining the characters both through stable use of socially or regionally indexical non-standard variants, and through the speech style contrasts that establish a character's position in relation to the other characters in the film. The importance of film dialogue to the character identity construction has been neatly summarised by Crothers, who suggests that it 'flashes the light on characters as lightning illumines the dark earth in flashes. It conveys so much in a few words that the actor holds a great instrument in his hand, and with it can make the audience know the depths of his being' (1928: 129).

Narrative development refers to the dynamic plane of film discourse and is most commonly revealed through the onscreen interaction between the characters, or references to the interaction of characters with the non-diegetic world. The focus is on interpersonal relations, the dynamics of which can be powerfully rendered through the use of language variation. Shades of emotion can be made apparent through the character's speech convergence to or divergence from their interlocutor's, distribution of roles can be portrayed through contrasts in speech styles, and changes to the behaviour can be emphasised through simultaneous shifts in speech patterns. Language variation can thus be used for a variety of purposes,

serving as an instrument of identity construction, narrative development, as well as for a number of secondary functions - for example, to 'adhere to the code of realism'.

Discussion of film dialogue would not be complete without establishment of links between diegesis of film and the audience. Here sociolinguistics has provided another useful framework. Bell's audience design (1984) and its later reworking into the framework of broadcast media talk analysis (1991) has proven useful for the conceptualisation of film audiences. 'What we've often overlooked is that viewers are also listeners, in fact, they are eavesdroppers, listening in on conversations purportedly addressed to others, but conversations that in reality are designed to communicate certain information to the audience' (Kozloff 2000: 14). This brings to our attention the duality of film dialogue, which has been addressed by a number of scholars who attempted to solve the tension between the different communicative levels of constructed dialogues from a variety of perspectives (e.g. Short 1981, Vanoye 1985, Hatim and Mason 1997, Babel 2008, Dynel 2011). Since this differentiation is crucial to the understanding of film dialogue, it is pertinent to give a brief overview of its conceptualisation and outline approach that will be taken in the following study.

According to Bell's audience design model (1984), text producer's style is affected by the addressees. Under the complex conditions of the multimodal product, it has been suggested (Bell 1991, Hatim and Mason 1997, Babel 2008, etc.), there is more than one addressee being addressed at every one time, which creates a two-level communicative system.

On the level of on-screen situation, the roles of text producer and addressee are given to the characters that engage in the interaction, while the audience is left in the position of eavesdroppers (in Bell's terms, listeners of whose presence the interlocutors are unaware). Although this interaction is staged and pre-scripted, characters enact 'interactional patterns of participation typical of ordinary conversation' (Dynel 2011: 50) that are aimed at evoking viewers' real-life experiences and through this facilitate their perception of filmic situations. Film dialogue thus adheres to the 'conversational maxims (Grice), models of verbal exchange and intervention (Goffman, Roulet), pragmatic markers and connectors, as well as non-verbal contributors (glances, posture, facial expressions, gestures) and para-verbal characteristics (voice, rhythm) of conversation' (Vanoye 1985: 116), and, as has already been proven, these elements can be successfully studied by application of linguistic and sociolinguistic methods.

What needs to be taken into consideration, though, is that conversational turns enacted by the characters and overheard by the audience 'become messages about the characters at the level of discourse which pertains between author and reader/ audience' (Short 1989: 146). On this level, the filmmaker talks to the audience, defining the character and giving the prompts regarding upcoming narrative turns by making characters speak in a certain way, and the audience becomes the addressees of the film discourse, which is ultimately constructed and presented specifically for them.

Besides the two primary communicative levels in film, other layers have also been identified. Clark's model of layered discourse distinguishes several 'layers (or domains) of action' on which events take place, and which are characterised by the participants, their roles and acts, the place, the time, and features of the situation (1996: 355): e.g. the domain of onscreen interaction, the domain of filming, the domain of viewing. Drawing on Clark's model, Bublil suggests that design of utterances in film discourse carries the impact of the whole film crew, including producer, screenwriter, director, camera and editing teams (2008: 68). All of these agents have a role in the construction of meanings, which get their embodiment through the enactment by actors and transmission to the audience, who are also attributed an active role, allowing it to co-construct the meanings. To avoid ambivalence of this double positioning of the audience, Dynel suggests to use the all-encompassing term 'recipients' (2011: 48-49), which allows to conceive of the audience not as illegitimate eavesdroppers on the on-screen conversation, but the powerful recipient, often possessing greater knowledge than on-screen interlocutors.

The preceding brief summary does not do full justice to the complexities of cinematic discourse, however, for the purpose of current research it seems appropriate to adopt the simplified model of two-layered communication in film without going into further details of multiplicity of actors that affect the construction of meanings during the course of film production. Since current study focuses on film as a text, a two-layer approach is deemed useful as a method for differentiating between units of analysis within this text. Although the dichotomy as such will be similar to the model of embedded discourse suggested by Short (1981, 1989), *horizontal* vs. *vertical* levels described by Vanoye (1985), and Dynel's *inter-character/ characters'* (communicative) vs. *recipients'* (communicative) levels (2011), because of a different perspective and purpose of application, for the current analysis I suggest to use the terms *micro-* and *macro-*levels. I believe that giving such self-evident names would draw attention to the way language variation can function simultaneously and yet differently on the two levels of film communication. Micro-level analysis would then

focus on the local instances of identity work within a single verbal exchange shown onscreen. Macro-level, on the contrary, would consider the entirety of the film text, in which individual elements are taken to be contributors to the construction of character identities and narrative development.

The last thing that needs to be noted with regards to the workings of film discourse is that 'both the members of the production crew and the members of the audience make use of their world knowledge to design and interpret the film dialogue' (Bubel 2008: 68). The shared world knowledge that is presupposed by the use of language variation is rich in social indexes, which can reveal a wealth of information about the existing social configurations, as well as the points of social tension. That being the focus of the following analysis, I would now like to introduce sociolinguistic toolkit, which derives largely from constructionist sociolinguistics, and show how it can be applied to the analysis of language variation in film discourse.

## **Section 2. Sociolinguistic toolkit for the analysis of film discourse**

Recent shift of focus towards the study of film discourse determines the need for a more careful consideration of the verbal component of onscreen interaction between the characters.

As was advanced by Kozloff, its functions are varied, but when approached on the micro-level, cinematic representation of interpersonal communication often bears on the patterns of speech common in the represented community. Although it cannot be fully equalled to the real-life talk, because of it being spatially and temporally removed from the audience, pre-planned and mediated, it is nevertheless constructed through the use of the same linguistic devices as those active in everyday communication. Indexicality (e.g. in Silverstein's 2003 understanding) becomes an important aspect of language use in films. At times it is used as a means of quick access to the social identities relevant for the character construction, at times it provides tools for more critical engagement with social configurations embodied in the marked lexis, as by virtue of film's macro-level orientation to the wide audiences it has the power to 'reinforce some social meanings and reinterpret others' (Bell and Gibson 2011: 561).

It would therefore be incorrect to conceive of films solely in terms of how they employ social indexes for the purposes of narrative construction - of no lesser importance is to take into consideration the role of film as mediator and negotiator of ideologically imbued linguistic elements. As observed by Coupland, films as well as 'mass media are the main contemporary means of constructing and consuming 'difference', including linguistically-indexed difference, and that is sufficient reason to treat mediation as a core sociolinguistic domain' (2009b: 295). Adopting Coupland's stance, I would like to further that the difference constructed, projected and made salient in the cinema through the use of language variation cannot be analysed in avoidance of concepts informing contemporary sociolinguistic research. It is therefore now in order to give an overview of the core concepts and approaches which will be applied to the following analysis.

### **2.1. Social identity through the prism of linguistic performance**

Linguistic realisation of social identities has been at the centre of sociolinguistic research ever since its inception. Social class was the first focus of the Labovian variationist research that has famously attempted to align dialect with social class indices. Conducted in a similar vein, a further body of works has been dedicated to social and regional variation, based on

the premises that dialects can be viewed as stable speech characteristics. This 'naïve and essentialist'<sup>21</sup> approach to the linguistic representation of social identities, albeit by now strongly criticised and confirmed as insufficient for the analysis of real-life identities, has certain values for research into the cinematic discourse, especially so with regards to the onscreen representation of 'flat' characters (Forster 1927): that is, minor characters that do not show any development in the course of the film, serving to support the lead characters, or making just a brief appearance that does not allow for substantial development.

It is in the nature of such 'flat' characters to adhere to the simplistic speech patterns similar to those identified by the early variationist research, sporting rich in associations and somewhat exaggerated, easily recognisable and predictable speech types that may be emphasised further by those characterisation techniques that rely on the visual image (appearance, clothing, accessories, etc.) The purpose of these techniques is to give out instant information about the character in a condensed and easily digestible manner. In order to achieve this, the filmmaker draws on the stereotypical associations that exist in the society. 'Flat' characters can therefore provide an insight into the range of stereotypical images existent in a given society at a given moment, and the linguistic devices associated with them. Importantly, the social indexicality of lexis, associated with linguistic construction of stereotypes, also informs the language choices serving to convey more complex and polyvalent identities, to the discussion of which it is pertinent to turn now.

Analysis of non-stable speech patterns should be based on the more recent critical perspectives on language variants. Stemming from Milroy and Milroy's (e.g. 1985) work on language standardisation and social constructionist thought, this strand of sociolinguistics argues for the need to reconsider prevailing views of the way social stratification informs language use. Rampton therefore suggests that social class should be interpreted as 'the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes [...] written into the whole body of practices and expectations experienced by the individual' (2006: 229). This, importantly, 'replaces the view of language as a set of indexical forms, whose use might correlate with social class categories, with a view of language as a social practice that might bring experiences of social class into people's lives' (Coupland 2009a: 312). Where social classes as such are of minor relevance, as is the case with Russian society, it is nevertheless

---

<sup>21</sup> See Coupland (2009b: 2-4) for further discussion.

important to take into consideration inequality and competition between a variety of social groups. Adopting a critical constructionist approach enables the analyst to see how language variation can be used to foreground 'dominance and subordination' by giving voice to marginal social groups. Presence of multiple voices also constructs grounds on which individual character identities can be negotiated through alignment versus resistance.

As described extensively in chapter 1, post-Soviet times have seen destabilisation of what had previously been a very strong standard language culture. Coupland's cautions against 'frozen' views of ideological loading of linguistic varieties (2010) call for reconsideration of the hegemonic power of standard ('literary') variety. 'Sociolinguistic change'<sup>22</sup> of the 1990s resulted in the language varieties losing their unequivocal ideological marking, legitimizing the use of e.g. slang, argot, obscenities in a variety of public domains. At the same time, in Coupland's own words, 'it is reasonable to invoke 'standard' and 'vernacular' as generally opposable categories, referring to a broad distinction between superposed, authorised ways of speaking and commonplace, local ways of speaking' (Coupland 2009b: 285). Conceiving of standard and non-standard varieties as contesting ideological entities thus determines conceptualisation of their users as active and agentive creators of meanings.

The changing views on the indexicality of social language varieties, increased interest towards the contexts of heightened focusing and ideological strengthening, have led constructionist sociolinguists to consider the use of language varieties in terms of their 'performance'. This term emphasises 'that speakers design their talk in the awareness - at some level of consciousness and with some level of autonomous control - of alternative possibilities and of likely outcomes' (Coupland 2007: 146). In his later discussion of metacultural performance, Coupland further suggested that 'if we talk of *performing* accents rather than 'using' them, it becomes easier to see their creative potential, which includes their potential to transform and resist dominant social values' (2009a: 313). Language varieties are then conceived as styling resources that can be employed in speech, or *performed*, by the speakers, who are at least to some extent aware of the identities they are projecting. With regards to the mediated performances, the critical distance is increased even further, which, in Coupland's terms 'encourages critical reflexivity around dialect performance' (2010: 70),

---

<sup>22</sup> The term was suggested by Coupland in his 2010 paper on 'Language, Ideology, Media and Social Change' in order to allow embedding of 'analyses of language change, taken to include change in the ideological loadings of linguistic varieties, within accounts of social change' (2010: 55).

and plays a key role in making culture visible, analysable and transportable (Bauman and Briggs 1990). From this point of view, analysis of constructed speech can no longer be considered incongruent with sociolinguistic method as it provides the analyst with material that is focused and aimed at projecting identities that are constructed from the building blocks of recognisable linguistic features. Attention to the 'performance' of language varieties can reveal competition between socially acceptable and antagonistic identities, point to the discursive management of power distribution, as well as shed the light on the stereotypes that are either taken for granted or being actively challenged within the current social reality.

Realised through onscreen communication, linguistic performance can be more or less 'spectacular', as suggested by Coupland (2007), who differentiates between mundane and high performance events (e.g. 2007: 146). Although the difference is not to be conceived of as dichotomy but as a continuum, distinction lies in the way these events are framed as well as in the intensity of projection. Social identities will thus be drawn upon and performed in either a more focused and determined manner during an act of high performance, or in a more relaxed and potentially negotiable manner during mundane performance. Within cinematic discourse, of course, even mundane performance of identities is a reflexive communicative event due to the heightened attention paid to it during the production process, and hence deserves to be analysed closer. However, it is through acts of stylisation that the social configurations are made most salient.

## **2.2. Enacting social differences**

Adopting a constructionist approach to language variation implies putting emphasis on the construction of meanings through interaction, and acts of identity become the centrepiece of such research. As outlined in the Introduction, identity is not seen by social constructionists as a tangible entity, but as 'an emergent construction, the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others' (Bauman 2000: 1). What this entails for the following research is the primary focus on dialogic construction of identities, where language variation becomes instrumental for the enactment of social contrasts voiced through the linguistic differences between the characters.

Sociolinguistic research has revealed a variety of ways in which social differences can be made salient in speech. The most telling of them refer to the instances of sudden shifts away from the habitual speech pattern, when the speaker changes their usual style of talk in order to achieve a specific effect. Drawing on the abovementioned distinction between mundane and high performance events, Coupland suggests that when it comes to high performances, stylisation becomes 'indispensable', since that is 'where cross-category social identification is more radical and more spectacular' (2007: 145). Although it has been mentioned previously that cinematic discourse is always characterised by increased reflexivity, it is nevertheless necessary to differentiate between the framing of mundane and high performances as they appear within the diegetic world. According to Coupland's reworking of Bauman's (1992) list of characteristics, (high) performance events are segregated from the routine flow of communication, focused, intense and intentional in delivery, as well as oriented towards achievement of specific effect on the audience. Under the conditions of such speech event, any deviation from the expected 'natural' way of speaking will be made immediately salient, inviting the audience to recognise, appreciate, and re-evaluate the tension between the projected identities. By taking the speech style out of its usual context, the speaker provides critical distance which objectifies the social relations that the given variety is indexical of.

Stylisation can hence be seen as a highly agentic performance (to the point of exaggeration) of someone else's languages, dialects and styles. Somewhat similar to stylisation is crossing, although it involves 'a stronger sense of social or ethnic boundary transgression, the variants being used are more likely to be seen as anomalously 'other' for the speaker, and question of legitimacy and entitlement can arise' (Rampton 2009: 149). While the term stylisation defines those instances of speech style appropriation, which are aimed at showcasing and critically engaging with the social differences represented by the performed language varieties, crossing refers to the instances of militant transgression, aimed at impinging on the other's linguistic territory. And yet, important similarities have to be emphasised – as noted by Rampton, 'as pointedly non-habitual speech practices, stylization and crossing break with ordinary modes of action and interpretation, invite attention to creative agency in language use, and often contribute to the denaturalization of hegemonic language ideologies' (ibid). Both strategies, and especially so in the case of crossing, challenge the audience and invite them to join in with the renegotiation of linguistic authority, questioning the established rules and delineation of language repertoire.

As noted by Bauman and Briggs, 'performances move the use of heterogeneous stylistic resources, context-sensitive meanings, and conflicting ideologies into a reflexive arena

where they can be examined critically' (1990: 60). Bringing these performances on screen emphasises the problems surrounding certain social indexes even further – when characters in Russian films are shown to shift between standard language and criminal argot, for example, it is more than specific identities that are being activated, but the whole range of associated considerations, including acceptability, position and contextualisation of non-standard language varieties within the post-Soviet Russian language use. Enacted identities hence become vehicles for social negotiations, requiring attention and careful critical analysis that goes beyond the surface indexicalities.

### **2.3. Framing interpersonal relations**

The way language variation can be employed in cinematic representation of instances of heightened focusing has been described above. It needs to be noted, though, that 'in film as in real life, crossing as marked, stylized performance is semiotically different from crossing as part of one's ordinary stylistic practice' (Bucholtz and Lopez 2011: 684). The difference, as suggested by Bucholtz and Lopez, lies in the fact that 'stylistic crossing is [...] typically a form of adequation or identity alignment, while stylized crossing is temporary rather than habitual and often foregrounds distinction, or disalignment with the performed identity' (ibid). Onscreen styling is therefore closely related to its everyday counterpart, which can be conceived of as speakers' agentive use of their linguistic repertoire for local everyday purposes, and can be linked to the Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's conceptualisation of 'linguistic behaviour as a series of *acts of identity* in which people reveal both their personal identity and their search for social roles' (1985: 14).

The effects sought from everyday styling as compared to stylization are hence more immediate and lie in the realm of interpersonal relations: affirmation of one's social position, establishing conditions of trust and cooperation, showing solidarity with some group or cause, etc. As shown by Giles (e.g. 1973) and subsequent research into Communication Accommodation Theory, management of interpersonal relations is a major motivation 'driving people's verbal and nonverbal communication adjustments in interactions' (Giles 2009: 278). Seen as means of converging to or diverging from the interlocutor's speech style, styling serves as an important communicative technique of everyday interaction that needs to be approached in terms of the speaker's agentive choice to converge / diverge and the degree to which to do it. In film discourse instances of style-shifts can be instrumental for the construction of character identities, as well as play crucial role in presentation of interpersonal dynamics. And yet, omnipresence of styling in everyday interactions

determines its frequent use in film discourse in part as a bow to realism – when a youth slang speaker shifts into standard speech when addressing the teacher, this is more likely than not to be determined by the likelihood of this situation in real life, rather than by specific narrative requirements.

Coupland draws our attention to the fact that styling does not necessarily occur for the purpose of showing solidarity with the evoked social group, but can 'imply different sorts of indexical relationship and different stances, such as projections made playfully or with some degree of identity fictionalising or qualification' (Coupland 2007: 111). Since the same linguistic resources can be employed for a variety of purposes, as well as be active in identity construction only in specific contexts of talk, analysis of linguistic realisation of acts of identity should be alert to the contexts and social frames in which they happen. The concept of *framing* has been devised by Goffman (1974) and relates to the social context of talk, favourable for the projection of specific types of identity. In Coupland's words, 'they [frames] will give relevance and salience to certain types of indexical features and meanings, or they will deny them relevance and salience' (2007: 112).

Applying the concept of framing can help to distinguish between the socio-cultural, genre and interpersonal frames (e.g. Coupland 2007), co-presence and tension between which can shed light on the relevance of linguistic features to the local acts of identity. From this perspective, convergence of a character to the interlocutor's speech pattern (e.g. the use of a specific (social) dialect), may serve as a representation of more than the character's desire to develop closer bonds, as it would be interpreted within the single interpersonal frame. Co-existence with the socio-cultural layer on which this specific dialect may be problematized or straightforwardly stigmatized, will determine the opportunity to read the converging pattern as ironic or condescending. When it comes to the film discourse, often heavily reliant on the indexical capacity of language to give out information about character identities or construct their interrelations, tension between the frames of talk can become especially salient and productive for the film narrative.

As suggested above, it is necessary to differentiate between the stylized performances, and onscreen representation of everyday styling. And yet, it is important to keep in mind that all mediated performances, such as films, are marked by increased reflexivity and therefore presuppose heightened focusing along the domains, suggested by Coupland (2007: 147-148). Of particular importance, as it seems, are the form, meaning and repertoire focusing, which will determine that even projections of everyday styling will appear in a more condensed and highly indexical form than can be anticipated in everyday communication, with the purpose

of styling performance made recognisable, and the balance between innovative and widespread elements carefully adjusted. Styling is hence made in the film discourse more transparent and its purpose foregrounded. Whether it is presented to underscore common grounds between the characters, or their sudden distancing from each other, whether it is used to construct social, ethnic, gendered identity, or rejection of certain group ideology, styling is a versatile tool that draws on the wider social context for the fulfilment of local needs. In film, the social context is distanced from the act of styling, and through that styling provides a further medium for the 'reflexive exploration and creative manipulation of the indexical relationships between language and social identity' (Bauman 2011: 713).

### Section 3. Study design

Recent sociolinguistic research has worked to reveal the complex and interdependent relations between language and society. Emphasising the importance of studying language in its social, cultural, historical, as well as local contexts, constructionists have developed an approach to language analysis that is based on the view of language use as agentive and purposeful. In line with the general constructionist theory, it assumes the capacity of speakers to construct their identities through creative exploitation of social indexes stored in the linguistic repertoire of their community, the social structure of which is not assumed to be a stable determinant of language use, but open to negotiation, challenge and even subversion through language. Such a model seems well fitted for the analysis of contemporary Russian language, the previously rigid standardized conception of which has been challenged by the post-Soviet social and ideological developments, resulting in the complication of standard vs. *substandard* opposition. As described in chapter 1 (3), following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the abolishment of censorship the use of non-standard language varieties has become a prominent feature of public speech, blurring the previously established style boundaries and expanding beyond the conventional functions of use. These changes have informed identity constructionist values that were made productive in post-Soviet films.

Language employed in films, although admittedly several times removed (through scripting, re-enactment and transmission) from the realm of real-life language, is important to analyse precisely because of the heightened reflexivity and focusing associated with its production. Dialogic and discursive way of identity construction at work in film, as it has been noted by film scholars, draws on the linguistic meaning-making repertoire, thus utilising, appropriating and exaggerating most productive and relevant resources much in the same way as speakers do in the other speech domains. The difference with regards to the cinema and mass media lies in the dislocated position of the recipients and their limited opportunities of influencing the interaction. This, according to Coupland, results in the 'mediation gap [that] encourages critical reflexivity around dialect performance' (2010: 70). This has twofold consequences for the following study. First, cinematic discourse foregrounds linguistic features that are already salient in the linguistic community due to their social indexicality, providing the analyst with material which is rich and potent in socio-linguistic connections. Second, in the case of those films that engage with exploration of a society in flux, as is the case with the post-Soviet cinema, the use of social indexes is often ambivalent. Activating multiple interpretative frames simultaneously, these films bring

to the fore contradictions and mismatches between them, providing an opportunity for subversive reading of such dialogues as ironic, mocking, or straightforwardly critical. Analysis of such complex uses of social indexes can reveal points of tension within the social structure that have prompted the filmmakers to open them up to public attention.

Bringing to light dramatic and overwhelming changes to the ideological underpinnings of language use, which have been described at some length in chapter 1, will help explore the way non-standard language has become a rich and multivalent meaning-making resource. This multitude of social indexes encoded in the non-standard was then brought into play in the process of identity construction in the linguistically heterogeneous environment of post-Soviet Russia. The historic period in question – from the collapse of the Soviet Union up to the consolidation of power by Putin in the early 2000s – with its political, social, linguistic turbulence has been naturally short-lived and followed by comparative stabilisation<sup>23</sup> and hence is already temporally removed from us. The use of film dialogues has therefore double value: on the one hand, it provides us with an instance of mediated performance which is in itself an intriguing field of research, on the other, it provides material which captures explorations of its contemporary society in the period when linguistic, as well as social, contrasts have been especially salient.

Drawing largely on Coupland's theory of style (2007) and closely linked constructionist sociolinguistic studies of Milroy, Rampton, Bauman, Bell, Bucholtz, Giles, etc., in the following study I consider the way language variation is employed in the post-Soviet Russian films as 'a semiotic resource (among many parallel resources) for constructing personal identities, relational configuration and group-level associations' (Coupland 2009a: 312). As we are dealing with the medium of film, other semiotic resources will of course be present alongside the verbal component, of which the most important one is the visual. Although the current study does not focus on the interplay between language and imagery, reference to the corresponding visual component will be made wherever it can contribute to the argument.

The following analysis will therefore focus on the use of language variation in the post-Soviet Russian films, and is set to investigate the following questions:

---

<sup>23</sup> As was pointed to in Chapter 1 (3).

1. How were slang, argot and obscenities used to construct character identities in the dialogues of the six selected post-Soviet films?
2. How did filmmakers engage with the social stereotypes conventionally associated with the use of slang, argot, obscenities?
3. How did instances of inter- and intra-speaker variation construct interpersonal relations?
4. What aspects of the post-Soviet social reality were critically engaged with in the local instances of identity performance?

In order to account for the representation of both structure-bound and agentive uses of language variation, this study was designed to consist of two analytical parts. Their focus will be on:

- The *static* connections between language and society, normally employed in the portrayal of a character through easily recognisable linguistic features that relate him/her to a specific social group. This type of identity representation employs social stereotypes and linguistic features with strong social indexicality. Depending on the context of use, it may or may not be critically engaging with the social values attributed to the employed language varieties, and yet it is always revealing of the indexical relations between language and social identities, which will become the focus of enquiry into the static dimension of characterisation.
- The *dynamic* use of language in characterisation, referring to the representation of intraspeaker language variation, which occurs when the speaker that has already been established as the user of a certain language variety, changes his/her speaking patterns, appropriating habitual linguistic devices of another person / social group. Changes in the patterns of speech can be indicative of the characters' interpersonal relations, e.g. emotional affinity shown through convergence to the interlocutor's speech, as well as of the development to the character's identity. Careful analysis of language variation within the speech of individual characters can also reveal deeper information about the social configurations that exist in the community, of which construction of power relations is the most pervasive.

As outlined above in section 2.1., it is possible to differentiate between micro- and macro-levels of communication in the film, which provides another useful analytical tool, allowing to study both local instances of identity performance as seen on the micro-level, and those repeated acts of identity which, when analysed on the macro-level, can shed light on the linguistic mechanisms that allow identities to be negotiated, developed and modified. Adopting a critical perspective on the relation between language variation and social structure will thus enable the analysis to look beyond the stable connections, uncovering identities that are 'multi-layered or hybrid or indeterminate' (Coupland 2009b: 288), and thus unveiling the de-stabilising and re-negotiating potential of language variation.

The aim of the following analysis, based on the scrutiny of the use of language variation in film discourse, is thus to identify its character identity construction values. Starting with an overview of the use of static resources in the construction of character identities, I will investigate the use of stereotypes in the construction of minor characters. Here, the interplay between verbal and non-verbal meaning-making devices will have to be taken into consideration, as costumes and accessories often signal stereotypical social identities alongside highly indexical linguistic elements (e.g. firearms and argot as attributes of a criminal; trendy clothes, latest gadgets and use of slang as attributes of a member of the youth scene, etc).

The analysis will then turn to the dynamics of characterisation. As patterns of language variation employed for the construction of identities and interpersonal relations are more complex in this instance, more attention will be devoted to dynamic use. Here distinctions will be made between inter- and intra-speaker variation, between shifts from standard into non-standard and those that go in the opposite direction. The prime focus will be laid on the investigation of how this creative manipulation of language explores indexical relations between language and society. These effects will be identified and analysed within the context of the post-Soviet Russian cinema that has had a persistent orientation towards the contemporary social realities and search for identities. It is suggested that in such case, film can provide a productive platform for creating points of conflict within an interpretative frame that attract attention to social phenomena, opening them up for reflexive reading.

It is therefore hoped that the presented method of analysis will be able to demonstrate how the use of language variation employed in films can, on the one hand, productively construct a range of character identities, and, on the other, reveal deeper information regarding the social practices, e.g. construction of power relations, distribution of roles in the society, etc., encoded in the use of language varieties. However, analysis of the reflection and reinterpretation of society within the constructed and mediated language of film cannot be separated from the socio-historic conditions of cinematic production, and so it is now pertinent to give an overview of the main concerns and developments in the Russian cinema of the post-Soviet period, and outline data selection procedures.

## Chapter 3. Post-Soviet cinema: 1991 – 2005

### Introduction

The previous chapters outlined the theoretical framework within which the following study is located, as well as the rationale for the use of sociolinguistic methods. In order to proceed to analysis, it is now necessary to contextualise the data. The process of language change, explained in Chapter 1 (3), was realised through many different aspects of language use, including its use in the public media. Although the overall direction of linguistic processes of change was similar for all public media, cinema has also undergone dramatic changes of its own. As cinematic developments cannot be fully divorced from the surrounding socio-political context, this chapter offers an outline of the most significant developments in the film production in the late 1980s – 1990s. Economic and political aspects will be considered, trying to establish the conditions which influenced the films of the researched period. What will come to the fore is cinema's overwhelming concern with national and individual identities, serving as further justification for the chosen methodological approach.

Having established the overall state and directions of Russian cinema in the post-Soviet period, I then turn to the data selection process, explaining the applied criteria. Six films thus selected will then be discussed. As the method for analysis requires careful attention to the context of the analysed stretches of dialogue, I see it as pertinent to give synopses of the selected films. Some further information about individual films, including the role of identity construction for their narrative, will also be provided. This discussion will be based on the conceptual views drawn from a variety of cinematographic studies - both Russian and Western.

## Section 1. 'The state of the national cinema' in post-Soviet Russia

### 1.1. Developments in the 1980s

Even a very broad overview of the Russian cinema's development in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century has to take into account the influence exerted by the socio-political events of the 1980s and 1990s. Announcement of *perestroika* and the policy of *glasnost'* in 1986, that led to the gradual elimination of censorship in all spheres of life, and the following collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, resulting in social and political upheaval, created conditions for unprecedented freedom of expression. In the 1980s, the foregrounding of *glasnost'* as a policy of openness and transparency, as well as the related concept of *pluralism*, opened up opportunities for voicing the opinions different from those legitimised from above. In the field of arts, the shift from the rule of bureaucracy to the wider decision-making powers of the artists was accomplished in record time. As reported by Lawton, as early as in May 1986 at the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Filmmakers' union, 'three-quarters of the conservative Union's secretariat was replaced with new members from the creative ranks rather than the bureaucratic apparatus' (1992: 10), including the first secretary of the Union, who was replaced by the then controversial film director Elem Klimov. The same year witnessed two more significant changes on the scene: appointment of Nikolai Gubenko as the new Minister of Culture, and reform of Goskino (State Committee for Cinematography) by the new director, a Gorbachevite Alexander Kamshalov.

The resulting changes in the way control over the film production was exercised provided filmmakers with larger institutional freedoms, which determined opportunities for them to pursue new directions in their work. Cinema, as well as the other public media, stopped producing glossy images of the (often imaginary) socialist world according to the provided guidelines, and became active agents in the creation of the new order of things. Eagerly taking on these new opportunities, in the period 1986 – 1991 'filmmaking was dominated by attempts to violate both the thematic and formal orthodoxies of Soviet-era cinema' (Faraday 2000: 159). Abolishment of censorship, which legally happened in August 1990, had de facto taken place even earlier, triggering an upsurge in the numbers of films that engaged with the social phenomena that had previously been proclaimed as non-existent in the Soviet Union. Best known films of that period show the full range of previously banned topics: for example, *Acca* (Assa, 1987) promptly followed the legalisation of the Soviet rock music, bringing onto the screens the rock music fan community, *Маленькая Вера* (*Little Vera*, 1988) was the first film to bring up the topic of youth sexuality, *Игла* (*Needle*, 1989) dealt with the problems of drug addiction, and *Интердевочка* (*International girl*, 1989) talked

about prostitution. Reflecting on this time in 1990, Peter Shepotinnik astutely compares the speed of this change to the introduction of sound in the films of the 1920: 'The impression is that "sound" has suddenly been turned on in our time, too. Everything has acquired voice – our history with a mass of blank spots, some of which it would be more accurate to call red spots, our economy of long queues and dying villages, and our unstable practical position in the world – everything started suddenly becoming visible' (1992: 331).

## **1.2. Film production under the socio-political and economic conditions of the 1990s**

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the beginning of a new era. Social changes that had started in the previous decade were further enhanced by political cataclysms. The country has entered a period of extreme turbulence in all spheres, which proved to have such a dramatic impact on the field of arts and culture as never before. It was especially prominent in the case of the cinema, which had been traditionally conceived of in the Soviet Union as 'the most important of all arts', and therefore tightly linked to the political situation in the country. Looking at the films from the first 15 post-Soviet years, it can be suggested that their production has been heavily influenced by the interplay between the following factors:

Firstly, as already mentioned, censorship had been eliminated by the late 1980s and the control over the cinematic production had been minimised. Expanding on the nature of Soviet censorship, Dondurei differentiates between its three aspects – political, historical and sexual. He suggests that the sudden simultaneous removal of all three types of censorship in the period leading up to 1988 resulted in a new trial for the filmmakers – the trial of freedom, the test which many of the directors, who came into prominence in the 1960s-1970s, did not manage to withstand (Dondurei 2007: 4).

Secondly, the collapse of the Soviet Union also caused dramatic changes to the economic conditions for the production and distribution of films in the early post-Soviet time. Larsen summarises the reasons for the decline of the Russian film industry as follows: 'the collapse of centralized distribution network; a flood of low-priced foreign imports into the cinema, television, and video markets; the dilapidated condition and outdated equipment of Soviet-era cinemas; widespread video piracy; the much-maligned 'darkness' (chernukha) of so many contemporary films; and the economic crises that decimated government subsidies for the film industry and made cinema tickets a luxury for the few rather than entertainment for the masses' (2003: 491). Such conditions render unsurprising the significant drop in the

number of films produced in that period: from 300 feature films produced in 1990 down to 28 produced in 1996 (Beumers 1999: 3).

Thirdly, the turbulent socio-political situation in the country determined the focus of the cinema on the contemporary realities. In an attempt to make sense of the changes that were happening in the country, filmmakers 'began to portray the reality that surrounded them without the ideological constraints hitherto imposed. What they saw was a bleak picture: beggars on the streets, impoverished pensioners, economic chaos, street crime, Mafia shootings, pornographic magazines and videos, decaying houses and ramshackle communal apartments, and the emergence of a new class, the New Russians, who adapted quickly and learnt how to make money in a society under reconstruction' (ibid: 1). These films, often made on a very low budget and offering 'unrelentingly hopeless picture' (Faraday 2000: 175), were labelled *chernukha* (lit. 'dark stuff') and dominated film production in the late 1980s – early 1990s.

The extent to which the Russian cinema of the 1990s was fascinated with contemporary life can be further illustrated by the emergence of a new trend to produce adaptations of classical novels transporting the plot from the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the present. Unlike the Soviet cinema, which used temporal remoteness to their advantage, seeing adaptations of the classical literature as safe grounds for creative expression, or even locus for sophisticated criticism of the state produced through the emerging parallels between the represented literary past and the Soviet present (Hutchings & Vernitski 2005: 19), post-Soviet cinema no longer required this historical 'buffer zone'. Quite on the opposite, transposing the story into the contemporary settings allowed for 'the dialogue of post-Soviet cinema film adaptations with the double baggage of nineteenth-century and Soviet cultural and ideological spaces' (Vernitski 2005: 200). Without going into detail of such adaptations, it is necessary to note that the late 20<sup>th</sup> century settings of films like *Katia Izmailova* (1994, adaptation of *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo Uezda* by Leskov), *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1996, reworking of Tolstoi's identically titled story), and *Down House* (2001, adaptation of *The Idiot* by Dostoevskii), demonstrate the fixation of the post-Soviet filmmakers with contemporary reality. In a way similar to *chernukha* films, these literary adaptations concerned themselves with controversial and / or shocking aspects of social behaviour.

### 1.3. The issue of national identity in the cinema of the 1990s

*Chernukha* cinema and the literary adaptations undoubtedly represent two distinctly different types of post-Soviet films, and yet their similarities can be located in the fact that they both in one way or another reflected chaotic and often absurd realities of contemporary social life, through this effectively representing the loss of social stability and the need for redefinition of national and individual identities. As observed by Hashamova, ‘after watching a substantial number of post-Soviet films, I came away with the impression that all these films testify to turbulent and drastic changes of Russian national identity development’ (2007: 12). Positing this to be the characteristic trait of the films of the first post-Soviet decade enables us to conceptualise the move away from *chernukha* cinema not as an attempt to replace it with a completely different cinematic experience, but rather to change perspective on the same central issue: the emergence of new social identities. Towards the second half of the 1990s, the cinematic production started to exhibit ‘tendencies that imply a different social, cultural, and national identity, an identity that is recovering from the chaos and is seeking alternative paths’ (ibid: 17).

It needs to be noted that despite the omnipresent concern with identity, what found representation on the post-Soviet screen was a very specific type of identity: identity in flux. In an attempt to classify the new cinematic heroes of the 1990s, comparing them to the ones from the previous decades, Beumers identifies ‘three distinctive types of heroes [that] emerge: the escapist (the successor of the non-conformist hero); the soldier (the successor of the conformist hero, but challenging the ideal of the Fatherland); and the new killer-hero’ (1999: 77). Although, as convincingly argued by Beumers, they do represent particular strands of the post-Soviet identity formation, none of them could be considered a satisfactory role model hero. Towards the middle of the 1990s the need to construct the national identity has been stressed by film critics and filmmakers alike. As early as 1992, Dondurei has openly called for filmmakers to create a ‘national mythology’, stating that at that point in time ‘there is no such thing as a national hero and nobody cares to create him’ (Faraday 2000: 179). Five years later, in his famous speech ‘On the state of the national cinema’, Dondurei gave a comprehensive account of the disastrous situation on the film market at that point. Among the reasons for viewers’ lack of support for the national cinema, Dondurei again mentioned cinema’s inability to present the audience with a positive hero (Dondurei 1999). These words were further echoed by Mikhalkov in 1998: ‘Man cannot exist without a hero. He has to have a model, a symbol’ (1999: 51). What can be furthered from these critical statements is that post-Soviet cinema preoccupied itself predominantly with transient identities, focusing on their search and negotiation. In the absence of social stability, the

cinema did not strive to construct solid and wholesome characters, but was true to the spirit of time, bringing on screens characters shown to be adapting to the rapidly changing social reality of the day, and therefore presenting first and foremost exploration of identities in flux.

Early post-Soviet cinema can thus be said to concern itself predominantly and in a variety of ways with the search for a new identity. Following a period of fascination with bleakness, from the mid-1990s 'the dominant theme was the reaffirmation of national identity rather than the deconstruction of official Soviet representations of society' (Faraday 2000: 159).

## Section 2. Data selection and synopses

### 2.1. Data selection

The socio-economic factors identified above have influenced not only the choice of topics covered by films produced in the first post-Soviet decade, but also their linguistic form. Probably the most significant change as compared to the previous period was in the widespread use of *mat*. It appeared not only in the speech of the characters but even in the titles of films (E.g. *Бля!* - dir. E. Gal'perin, 1990, *Сукины дети* – dir. L. Filatov, 1990). Slang and argot also saw rapid increase, partly due to the sudden upsurge in the numbers of films dealing with the criminal underworld. This has often been linked to the overall criminalisation of the post-Soviet society. To avoid judging cinema as mirror reflection of the surrounding social realia, Oushakine suggests to ‘construe the aestheticization of banditry as an approach that reveals the ambiguous status of law in contemporary Russia’ (2007: 358). This perspective attributes to filmmakers a more agentive role in exploring and reflecting upon the contemporary social conditions and their implications for the national identity development. From the linguistic point of view, this allows for a productive enquiry into the use of linguistic resources chosen by the filmmakers to represent identity construction and negotiation. Such perspective argues against simplistic views on the use of language in film dialogues, at times presented in film reviews. For example, it has been reported that some of the post-Soviet films sported such elaborate slang and argot items that an ordinary viewer would be unable to understand them. *Мама не горюй!* (*Don't cry Mommy!* 1997) is one such film, the language of which was debated upon by a variety of film critics with diametrically opposite views, some hailing it for the contribution to the development of Russian language, the others putting the filmmakers to shame for excessive use of incomprehensible slang and argot (cf. Liubarskaia 2005). Avoiding judgemental pronouncements, a more balanced enquiry is suggested in the present study: to examine how the use of non-standard lexis enabled filmmakers to construct character identities. In order to succeed with this analysis, various threads of the argument, presented in the preceding chapters and sections, need to be brought together. With regards to the current material, it needs to be taken into account that although the formal aspects of elimination of censorship and lack of quality control have undoubtedly paved the way for the freedom with which the language was employed in the films of 1990s, these developments were in line with more general trends, discernible in the language use of all Russian public media, as described in Chapter 1.

The omnipresent concern of the post-Soviet cinema with the issue of identity, and the wider use of non-standard language varieties in the public media determined the general approach taken in this thesis. For it to provide insightful findings, the dataset had to be carefully selected. Due to the scope and temporal limitations of this project, the dataset selected does not lay claims to being fully representative of the whole body of the post-Soviet cinema. Instead, the following two sets of criteria were devised and implemented in the selection of films for analysis, enabling a balanced and wide-reaching dataset to be compiled.

The first set of criteria was directly determined by the analytical framework and research questions. The films were thus pre-selected according to:

- the country of production (Russia),
- the year of production (linguistic focus on the use of slang, argot and obscenities in post-Soviet films suggested limiting the understanding of ‘post-Soviet’ to the period with least inhibitions to the use of language in the public media – from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 to the adoption of the ‘Law on the State Language of the Russian Federation’ in 2005), and
- the use of non-standard lexis (although no definite criteria were devised as to the minimum number of occurrences of non-standard lexis for the film to be considered, the time required to transcribe the film dialogues and identify non-standard lexical items determined that an evidently frequent use of non-standard was sought for the film to be considered a suitable candidate for analysis).

The second set of criteria can be considered subjective, and yet it proved to be no less important for compiling a balanced dataset for analysis. To achieve this, it was decided to include films of:

- different genres (comedy, drama, crime, fantasy);
- different stages of the predetermined period (1993, 1995, 1997, 2005), and
- sufficient quality (mention in the critical literature, including Russian cinematographic journals *Iskusstvo Kino* and *Seans* was considered). With regards to the issue of quality, it needs to be noted that although some of the selected films enjoyed high critical acclaim and were widely discussed in both Russian and Western literature (this is especially true of the film *Brother*), some of the others are lesser known. *Don't cry Mommy!* and *Shirli-Myrli* are perhaps the least critically acclaimed films, with the former having been accused of representing criminal world unknown and uninteresting for the general audience, and the latter to be worthless

kitsch. Nevertheless, as will be made evident in the individual discussions of these films, they are not only of adequate quality, but also thematically and linguistically pertinent for this thesis, and therefore deserve to be included alongside their more acclaimed counterparts.

Films were thus chosen according to both objective and subjective criteria. Decisions regarding subjective criteria, such as quality, were based on the critical reviews drawn from both official critical literature (such as the journals mentioned above) and the popular forums and message boards of Russian cinema enthusiasts (such as *ruskino.ru* and *kino-teatr.ru*). Restricted time-scale of this research project and its aim to provide detailed linguistic analysis have limited the number of films to 6, of which some reflect social conditions of the post-Soviet period more generally, and some focus on some specific aspects of it. The latter was deemed especially important, as with the linguistic focus falling on slang and argot it seemed pertinent to include film material that provided extensive representation of social groups conventionally associated with these language varieties: *Don't cry Mommy!* was thus chosen due to its in-depth representation of the criminal underworld, and *The Italian* – because of its focus on the children / adolescent peer-groups.

Six films were thus selected for the analysis within the scope of present research:

Russian title	International release title	Director	Year of release	Genre	Duration
<i>Окно в Париж</i>	Window to Paris	Yu. Mamin	1993	Comedy, Fantasy	112 min.
<i>Особенности Национальной Охоты</i>	Peculiarities of the National Hunt	A. Rogozhkin	1995	Comedy	95 min.
<i>Ширли-Мырли</i>	Shirli-Myrli	V. Menshov	1995	Comedy	143 min.
<i>Брат</i>	Brother	A. Balabanov	1997	Crime, Drama	96 min.
<i>Мама не горюй</i>	Don't Cry Mommy	M. Pezhemsky	1997	Crime, Comedy	82 min.
<i>Итальянец</i>	The Italian	A. Kravchuk	2005	Drama	97 min.

**Table 1.** Films selected for the analysis

The dataset thus compiled consisted of 625 minutes of film dialogues, within which items belonging to the lexical categories of criminal argot, youth slang and obscenities were identified. With regards to the selection of such items, although their definitions and conceptualisation were discussed at length in Chapter 1, 3.2.1. – 3.2.3, it needs to be reiterated that differentiation between standard and non-standard items is often subjective, conventional and subject to change over time, which precludes clear delineation between various lexical strata. Hence, Khimik in his study of ‘low’ language varieties concludes that one can only approach criminal and youth sublanguages as relative concepts. This is for two main reasons: firstly, they cannot be considered as languages in the full meaning of this term, as they deviate from the standard language mainly in terms of distinct lexis and phraseology (and only occasionally in terms of preferred pronunciation and grammatical structures); secondly, they cannot be considered integral entities due to the multiple variants that exist within them – for example, within youth slang the subvarieties of school slang, university slang, music fans’ slang, IT slang can be differentiated (2000: 19). Similarly, as has been previously mentioned, the body of obscenities is not only culturally and historically bound, but its definition and differentiation from insults, euphemisms and general swearing is also highly subjective (cf. Levin 1998). Accepting such a high level of relativity, for the purposes of current study the lexical items were identified on the basis of the following criteria:

- *Differentiation from the standard language* was ascertained through the presence of selected items in the specialised dictionaries of youth slang, criminal argot and obscenities (both mono- and bi-lingual). As lexical items considered non-standard at one point in time can later enter the standard language, it was decided to consult only those dictionaries that roughly coincided in time of publication with the production period of the selected films (1990s – 2000s).
- *Differentiation from general vernacular (просторечие)* in the case of slang and argot was established through the presence of etymological and productive links to specific social groups. This criterion can be considered subjective and is based first of all on the ability of a lexical item to evoke a connection to a specific social group, and not on the historical aspect of its derivation. This implies that although many lexical items originated in criminal argot, only those that retained their connection with the criminal world will be included in the analysis, thus excluding such words as *двурушничать, манатки, шебаршить*, whose links to marginal social groups have been blurred (cf. Khimik 2000: 20). This also excludes from the analysis such non-standard items as e.g. *морда, шастать*, as they belong to the general vernacular and do not evoke connection with either criminal world or youth subculture.

It is important to note that in the case of obscenities, inclusion of such items in specialised dictionaries of *mat* / swearing / obscenities was considered enough for them to be included in

this study. At the same time, however, diversity within the obscene stratum called for further evaluation of these items in terms of their strength, as reflected in the analytical discussion of obscene usage. Such low-key expressivisms as *зад*, *жона*, *дерьмо* were hence considered to be obscene for the purpose of this study, alongside derivatives from the strongest *mat* stems. This allowed for a focus on the individual instances of obscene use, which derive their strength from the context of utterance rather than being pre-determined by the form of the expression alone.

To sum up, the following analysis will look at the use of the three lexical categories:

- criminal argot, defined as lexis commonly used to refer to and associated with criminal activities,
- youth slang, defined as lexis commonly used by and associated with the young population,
- obscenities, defined as rude and vulgar expressions used to express strong feelings and/or derogate the object of speech.

## **2.2. Synopses**

In the remaining part of this chapter I am going to present brief synopses of the films selected for the following analysis. As linguistic means of identity construction are embedded in the context of the encounters, each linguistic exchange will have to be contextualised at a relevant point of the following discussion. However, here it is pertinent to give a broader overview of these films, including information on the main plot lines, the protagonists and the critical reaction to each of the films.

### **2.2.1. Window to Paris**

The film is set in St. Petersburg of the early 1990s. Nikolai, a school teacher of music and aesthetics, is moving into a room in a communal flat. The previous inhabitant has mysteriously disappeared and left the room vacant. Soon after moving into the apartment, Nikolai and his neighbour Gorokhov discover that the back side of the old wardrobe in Nikolai's room is in fact a portal to Paris, through which they can gain unrestricted, albeit temporally limited, access to the capital of France. What follows is at times comic, at times tragic, at times romantic story of Russians' first encounter with the Western world. The plotline revolves round the adventures of Nikolai and his neighbours: Gorokhov and his wife Vera, Ivan Kuzmich, a pensioner and a keen fisherman, Fedor, a devout communist, and a

young unnamed hippie character. The audience is shown various attempts of the Gorokhov family to earn money, ranging from staging a Russian folk performance to downright stealing; the development of a love-story between Nikolai and a young Parisian artiste Nicole, who happens to share the roof-top terrace with the Russians' window; Nikolai's interaction with a Russian émigré who sheds light on the less glamorous sides of the French life. At the film's culmination point, Nikolai is facing his pupils, who have attempted to escape from him and start independent lives in Paris. He is trying to persuade them to return to their native city and their families, eventually proclaiming: 'You're right. You were born at the wrong time in a miserable bankrupt country. But it's still your country. Can't you make it a better place?'(tr. Faraday 2000: 184). The film finishes with all of the characters safely returning back to their 'side' of the window and it closing down, precluding further travel.

The search for national identity in this film is thus set against the backdrop of the Western, 'civilized' one. This caused Faraday to consider this film in terms of the trope of 'exile rejected' (2000: 183) and Beumers to see it as presenting 'the escapist hero' (1999: 77-81). Indeed, this film is a fantasy not only in terms of surreality of the plot, but because it represents the characters' encounter with the West, which in the Soviet times had been the subject of the collective fantasy and imagination. Hashamova's analysis suggests that this film reveals 'temptations and fears provoked by the first opportunities and challenges to emerge after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and invite[s] a parallel to the identity development of the adolescent that require a search and acceptance of new values and self-definitions. [...] Employing the western cultural screen, the Russian collective imagination tries to build its new national image, which reflects and rejects, promotes and denounces western values and beliefs' (2007: 17).

### **2.2.2. Peculiarities of the National Hunt**

This film is about Raivo, a young Finn who is researching Russian hunting traditions. When his Russian friend Zhenia offers to take him on a hunting trip, Raivo jumps on this opportunity to see the 'real' Russian hunt in action, and joins a group of friends during their short hunting vacation on a remote island. The main protagonists, besides Raivo and Zhenia, are: Kuzmich, a local gamekeeper who the friends are visiting, a meditative and nature-loving character; Mikhalych, an army general, evidently highly regarded by the friends and renowned for concise and meaningful toasts; Lev, a criminal investigations officer, the most competitive and power-seeking of the friends. Despite the title and the frequently worded appeals for action from Raivo, the film is not as much about hunting, as it is about vodka-

drinking and consequential absurd and surreal adventures: the appearance of a drunk bear cub in Kuzmich's *banya*, an incident with a local policeman who gets drunk and loses his gun, confusion among the friends that leads to them shooting each other instead of the ducks. In the end no animals are actually killed, but peculiarities of the Russian hunt have become apparent to the Finn Raivo, who abandons his dreams of a 19<sup>th</sup> century-style hunt, takes up vodka drinking and through this enters the camaraderie.

As such, 'the film lacks a traditional story line; the only development is an increase in the quantity of vodka consumed' (Hashamova 2006: 214). The problem of identity pursuit in this film is thus not necessarily evident at a glance, and yet Beumer's concept of 'the escapist hero' applies here as well. In Rogozhkin's film such 'escape into a dream world is induced by alcohol; it leads to [...] the destruction in this world of any social hierarchy' (Beumers 1999: 78). Adventures are self-imposed and this fact deflates violence and disaster: the hunters are in pursuit, rather, of beauty, friendship, and brotherhood (Larsen 1999: 203). To what extent these issues resonated with the contemporary society is revealed through its critical and popular acclaim: the film won several prizes (e.g. Grand-Prix at the Kinotavr Festival, Nika award for the Best Film, Best Director and Best Male Actor) as well as became a box-office hit (cf. Hashamova 2006: 220-221).

### **2.2.3. Shirli-Myrli**

This slapstick comedy starts in Siberia, where the world's biggest diamond is shown to be found. It is valuable enough to pay off the huge national debt and allow every Russian citizen to move to the Canary Islands for a year. This special diamond, naturally, becomes a target for the mafia. The conflicting interests of the Russian government and the mafia with regards to the diamond get further complicated when the famous con man, Vassilii Krolikov, succeeds in stealing the diamond. Both the police force and the mafia are now after Krolikov, whose skills are aided by the confusion created by the appearance of his two identical brothers, from who he was separated at birth. Innokentii Shniperson, an ethnic Jew and a world-wide famous classical conductor who is about to get married to an American citizen Carol, the daughter of a millionaire; Roman Almazov, a proud Gypsy and a candidate in the forthcoming parliamentary elections, and Vassilii Krolikov, an ethnic Russian with a modest background, come together for the first time since the day they were born. The joy of their reunion is overshadowed by ethnic prejudices that the brothers have to overcome: Vassilii is openly anti-Semitic and struggles to come to terms with being part-Jewish (Shniperson is the true surname of the brothers' deceased father), while Innokentii detests Gypsy music, believing it to have corrupted the taste of the Russian classical composers. The

three brothers finally find agreement in that all ethnic backgrounds are ok, as long as the person is not black, only to learn at the end of the film of the existence of their fourth brother, the black Patrick Crolikow, who was raised in the USA.

This film was one of the most watched films of the mid-1990s: it was reported that 1, 2 million viewers saw this film within the first year of its release, making it the largest audience for a home production in that period (Furikov 1998: online). Although the light comic treatment of the complex and at times absurd social realia of the day, enhanced by the acting skills of the cast full of Russian and Soviet film stars, can be put forward as the reason for high popularity of the film, the topicality of the central issues of the film's plot-line should not be overlooked. Xenophobia and ethnic conflicts have been a pervasive issue ever since the decline of the authoritarian Soviet regime, marking underlying insecurity and instability of national identities. As pointed out by Hashamova, 'a confidence in one's national identity can be determined by the capacity to autonomously relate to the other, much as the transition of the unstable world of the adolescent to the stable world of adulthood is marked by the capacity to establish deep and lasting romantic relationships' (2007: 18). Menshov's film goes even further than exploring a romantic relationship – it presents a situation in which the blood brothers have to overcome socially constructed bias. It thus provides an opportunity to reflect on the ways that performance of one's own identity can infringe on the identities of the other people surrounding you, and what implications this can have for all those involved.

#### **2.2.4. Brother**

The film's plot revolves round the figure of Danila Bagrov, a young man who is first introduced shortly after his demobilisation from the army. Having found no opportunities in his home town, he goes to St Petersburg where his older brother resides. Viktor, Danila's brother, turns out to be involved with the gangsters' circles and employs Danila to help him out on several occasions. The film *Brother* is essentially the story of Danila's search for his place in this unknown city, seen through the prism of the under-world. Some of the protagonists have strong links with the criminal world: Danila's brother Viktor, mafia leader *Kruglyi*, as well as the numerous members of his gang and other thugs. Another group of characters is formed by Danila's random acquaintances: Kat, who is a devout member of the youth subculture, Sveta, Danila's short-lived sweetheart and wife of the abusive Pavel, and *Nemets*, a kind and philosophical homeless man. Danila is seen as the link between these two worlds, interacting with people from both of them, while really not belonging to either. In the end, Danila, who becomes involved in the criminal business by his brother, kills off

*Kruglyi* and the members of his gang. Having done that, he sends his older brother back to their native provincial town, while he himself leaves St Petersburg for Moscow.

Having won a number of awards (e.g. at the Film Festivals in Trieste, Torino, Cottbus, Sochi) and having been released in over 20 countries of the world,<sup>24</sup> *Brother* is often seen as one of the most successful Russian films of the decade. Danila Bagrov's role as the 'hero of our time' has been discussed in a number of critical reviews (e.g. Dondurei 1998, Beumers 1999, Hashamova 2006, 2007), often presenting him as a contemporary Robin Hood; unlike his older brother, he kills not for money but for justice, and yet he is a ruthless, cold-blooded killer. Beumers calls Danila 'the killer-hero', saying that 'the modern hero has nothing to live for – other than hollow dreams and imagined love – and nothing to die for in the absence of patriotic values' (1999: 83). Danila thus, she continues, 'combines within himself the contradictions at the heart of the "Russian idea": self-assertion and self-effacement, the right to judge and the compassion to redeem, West and East' (ibid). The film does not provide any suggestions as to how to solve these contradictions, they are simply revealed and foregrounded in this portrayal of 'the violent and desperate worlds of disoriented men suddenly deprived of stability and certainty in their identities' (Hashamova 2006: 210).

#### **2.2.5. Don't Cry Mommy!**

The film starts with a fight at a wedding. A man is beaten up by the groom (also known as Sailor), as he was trying to chat up the bride. The man turns out to be an important member of the mafia, and a deal is made between mafia bosses and the police that Sailor should go to prison, along with three other criminals long sought after by the police. The deal is to be brought into action by three men representing different branches of the law enforcement: Major Alexei, the Prosecutor and Artur. Artur is the central figure of the film, an independent mafia associate, whose job it is to make sure the provisions of the agreement are complied with. When the three men arrive at the thugs' flat, they find out that Sailor has escaped, or rather, was allowed to go by the senior gangster Zubek. What follows is the story of failing attempts to capture Sailor, who manages to escape, first, from the hit man Rinat, and then from a team of contract killers, Makar and his Uncle. In the meantime, the Major discovers that Zubek, who he is supposed to detain, is one of his brothers in arms from the Afghan war. The two men indulge in heavy vodka-drinking and reminiscences of the war

---

24 information taken from the website 'Kino Rossii':  
<<http://www.kinoros.ru/db/movies/66/index.html>> . Last accessed 12.09.2012.

times. The Prosecutor, by contrast, is in rehab from alcohol addiction and for a long time refuses to join the two men in their drinking spree. When he eventually surrenders, one shot proves to be enough to knock him out, and Artur is effectively left to capture Sailor on his own. In another story line, two teenage girls, Lena and Katia, are plotting an armed robbery, but get interrupted on several occasions by men hunting down Sailor. The film finishes when the gangsters are detained, with Sailor substituted by the drunk Prosecutor. On his way home in his car, Artur is waved down by a random man, who asks to give him a lift to the port and turns out to be the infamous Sailor.

This film is, perhaps, the least well-known and acclaimed of the six films analysed in the thesis, however, this is not to say that it has not received any recognition. Liubarskaia mentions a number of praising reviews, many of which comment on the novel and creative criminal language used in the dialogues (cf. Liubarskaia 2005: online). Although this is in itself valuable for the current research, this film also presents a deeper representation of the contemporary social dynamics than suggested by Liubarskaia. Setting the focus on the character of Artur enables us to see him as an in-between, neither fully associated with the legal officers, not with the criminal world. His character is pointing to the ambiguous state of law in the Russia of the 1990s, where news videos would get arranged before events took place, and it was the number of detainees that would interest the police rather than the nature of the crimes individual criminals had committed. Significant overlaps between the legal and the criminal authorities, as well as the limitations of supposedly unlimited criminal powers (it takes just one Sailor to confuse all the plans) come to the fore in this film, serving as context for Artur's identity negotiation in interactions with representatives of the different walks of life.

#### **2.2.6. The Italian**

This film tells the story of a six-year-old orphan, Vania Solntsev. His life in a remote provincial orphanage is disturbed when he is chosen for adoption by an Italian couple. Nicknamed 'The Italian' by the other orphans, he is envied and considered to be lucky. Things change again though when the biological mother of Vania's friend, who had been adopted earlier that year, arrives. After the unsuccessful visit to the orphanage, she commits suicide, and Vania starts wondering if his real mother would ever be able to find him, if he gets adopted by the Italian couple. The orphanage is shown as a tightly knit community with its own hierarchies and leaders. Adolescent leader Kolian lays claims to vast powers, enraging freedom-seeking teenage prostitute Irka, who teaches Vania how to read and then helps him to run away in search of his mother. By this time, though, the adoption fees have

been paid, and the adoption broker, corrupt Zhanna Arkadiavna, is eager to find Vania to salvage the deal. Followed by Zhanna Arkadievna and her driver Grigorii, and searched for by the police, Vania makes his way to the central orphanage where his documents are kept in the archive. Desperate to find his mother, he is unstoppable, and when Grigorii finally catches up with him, Vania is ready to shed (his own) blood. At the end of the film, Vania finds his own mother and goes to live with her, while his friend Anton gets adopted by the Italian couple instead of him.

The film, at the surface of things, tells a very simple story: an orphan child's longing for a mother. And yet, as affirmed by the multiple cinematic awards (e.g. at the Film Festivals in Berlin, Zurich, Honfleur) and warm reception of its release in several countries (e.g. Russia, USA, Germany), it succeeds in making it relevant for a wide range of audiences. In the context of Russia's search for a national hero, the words of the film critic Tatiana Ensen gain special importance. She suggests that *The Italian* offers just that kind of a hero: 'he, who is not afraid to go alone against the current, to build his house not on sand, but on a rock' (2005: online). The film brings to fore how the search for one's own identity can require the ability to fight against communal beliefs, social conventions and bureaucratic formalities, as Vania not only makes a life-changing choice for himself, he is also shown to be negotiating his way towards this goal through an intricate labyrinth of social hierarchies which even six-year-olds are expected to abide by. This is the story about determination and maturity well beyond age, about personal values and the ability to fight for them.

## Conclusion

Russian films of the early post-Soviet years were produced under conditions that stood in stark contrast to the preceding period. Drastically reduced funding and distribution options, on the one hand, and virtually unlimited freedom of expression, on the other, determined the conditions under which the cinema operated. The influence of the rapidly changing socio-political realities of the early post-Soviet period on filmmaking was succinctly put by Selianov in his 1997 speech: 'in the past, cinema in Russia was greater than life, whereas nowadays in Russia life is infinitely greater than cinema' (1999: 44). Having lost its appeal as the main spectacle, cinema of the 1990s focused on reflecting social conditions, many of which had previously been banned from onscreen representation. This was first realised by bringing onto the screens the bleak social realities of the day in *chernukha* films, and, later, through cinematic exploration and attempts at construction of the national identity.

The 'heroes' of the cinema of the 1990s are very different from the strong-willed and inspirational characters of the Soviet period. Beumers distinguishes three main types: the escapist, the soldier and the new killer-hero (1999: 77), none of which could, or, indeed, was intended to provide a role model or guide for the disoriented audience. Instability and ambiguity of hero-types, the focus on their search of identity, rarely shown to be rewarded with a univocal conclusion, is overall typical of that period and is also characteristic of the films chosen for the analysis.

This chapter has thus provided an overview of major developments in the cinematic field starting from the late 1980s, identifying the central concern of the post-Soviet cinema with contemporary realities, often represented through protagonists' search for identity in the changing world of post-Soviet Russia. The chapter has also justified the selection and provided synopses of the six films, chosen for the study.

Positing the central concern of the selected films with the characters' search of identity, the following analysis will employ sociolinguistic methods to look at the way slang, argot and obscenities were used by the filmmakers to represent character identity construction and negotiation. It is suggested that stereotypical associations of non-standard lexis were often drawn on for characterisation purposes. The next chapter will thus look at cinematic representation of social stereotypes, and how static connections between language and society were employed by these filmmakers.

## Chapter 4. The statics of characterisation: social stereotypes

### Introduction

In chapter 1 I argued that non-standard language varieties have to be approached as ideological constructs, whose meanings derive from the conflux of political and social determinants. Unlike the more stable features of standard language, social indexicality of non-standard language is deeply rooted in its time, place and social circumstances. One way in which social configurations that stand behind these indexical connections at a specific point in time can be revealed is through study of the linguistic construction of social stereotypes, which often represent social groups situated on the margins of society. With film dialogues forming the dataset for the following analysis, what comes to the fore is the way stereotypes are employed for the construction of character identities. Chapter 2 has already pointed to the natural propensity of film dialogue for reduction of perceptual complexity, which favours highly indexical items (both linguistic and visual). Cinema, thus, ‘uses language variation and accent to draw character quickly, building on established preconceived notions associated with specific regional loyalties, ethnic, racial, or economic alliances. This shortcut to characterization means that certain traits need not be laboriously demonstrated by means of a character’s action and an examination of motive’ (Lippi-Green 1997: 81). This aspect of the meaning-making potential of non-standard language varieties becomes especially valuable in cases when there is a need for quick identification with a specific social group, as is the case with minor characters. Leaving aside the complex identities of lead characters, this chapter starts by exploring the role of non-standard language in construction of minor character identities. Resting prominently on social stereotypes that exist in the given historic period and locale, the researched films employ the indexical potential of such non-standard language varieties as youth slang, criminal argot and obscenities, which constitute the focus of current research.

Building on the insights provided by the recently established field of sociolinguistics of performance, this chapter concurs with the point that ‘the socio-theoretic dimensions of structure and agency are basic to any consideration of language performance’ (Bell & Gibson 2011: 559). It is impossible to consider the meaning-making potential of socially marked language without establishing first the expectations it sets up in the viewers. Only against the backdrop of these conventional connections does it become possible to effectively research agentic deviations from the stereotype that unleash new meanings

through building up viewer expectations and then defying them. Crucial for the establishment of expectations is the interplay between the many modalities that are present within films. The analysis hence considers dialogues alongside the visual component, looking at the way stereotypes are constructed with the aid of costumes, settings, appearance, etc. These also work to embed the stereotypes more solidly into their temporal and spatial context, the specificity of which will be discussed at length where appropriate.

Approaching the study of indexical connections between language and society, drawn on by filmmakers, from the position of constructionist sociolinguistics opens up for exploration the mutual influences of cinema and society. The following analysis conceptualises cinema not as a passive user of social stereotypes, but as an agentic partaker in the process of their construction, re-evaluation and re-interpreting. Special attention will hence be paid to the reflexive dimension of language performance, which invites the viewers to reflect on the validity of performed stereotypes and social boundaries established through them. This dimension becomes especially prominent in the instances of self-stereotyping. Exploiting the opportunities presented by the cinema, filmmakers can show representations of own-group stereotyping, bringing to viewers' attention outgroup perception of their own nation. Even though this reflexive representation is still deeply embedded in the ingroup socio-cultural context, it possesses the power to question traditions and customs and offer their critical reading.

This chapter will therefore start with a brief introduction of the concept of stereotype and its importance for mediated representation of marginalised social groups. I will then introduce the data findings in relation to stereotypes, followed by in-depth exploration of social groups overtly stereotyped in the film discourse (youth, criminals, uneducated). Finally, I will look in some detail at the performance of self-stereotyping that takes to an extreme the reflexivity inherent in staged performance, inviting the viewer to re-assess the basics of their own identity.

## **Section 1. Social stereotypes in cinema**

According to classic definition by Allport 'stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category' (1954: 191). This definition emphasises that stereotypes serve an important purpose of ordering the world around us, which is 'a necessary, indeed inescapable, part of the way societies make sense of themselves, and hence actually make and reproduce themselves' (Dyer 1993: 12). The process of stereotyping, according to Hewstone and Giles, involves three essential aspects (i) the categorization of individuals usually on the basis of identifiable characteristics, (ii) the attribution of specific traits, roles, emotions, etc., to all or most members of a category, (iii) the attribution of said characteristics to any individual member of the category (1997: 271). It is common for a range of stereotypes to be widely accepted among the members of a community, the choice of which is often determined by geographical proximity to another ethnic group or history of co-habitation between different social groups. Once established within the community, stereotypes can then be reproduced at will in order to create 'shortcuts' to stereotyped identities. Thus in the cinema, just a few words, said in a recognisable dialect or sociolect, especially when supported by matching attributes, can immediately provide recognition of a character as a member of a specific social group.

Simplification of group attribution associated with stereotyping is without doubt a useful social tool, and yet it is in many ways problematic. As has been noted by many scholars (e.g. Lippmann 1922, Allport 1954, Dyer 1993), automatization of stereotyping leads to establishment of rigid boundaries, covert exercise of power and frequent consequential stigmatization. Indeed, 'stereotypes set up expectations of behaviour' and the resulting urge to place someone 'into a category' determines the fact that 'disconfirming evidence tends to be ignored, but confirming evidence remembered' (Hewstone and Giles 1997: 276). It is, however, a dangerous thing, as argued by Dyer (1993), since few of the social characteristics have sharp boundary definitions, as insisted upon by the sheer nature of stereotyping. This leaves such fluid and invisible categories as sexuality or mental health rigidly categorised and delimited from what the dominant value system takes to be the norm. This in itself can be seen as exercise of power on the part of those who initiate the 'othering' of certain social groups, simultaneously establishing their own kind as the 'norm' of social behaviour. For example, it has often been stated that in the Western world of our time, the social 'norm' is the white heterosexual able-bodied male, while all the other groups are to various extents

antagonized and 'othered' through being constructed as deviating from this norm. This leads us to the final point, relating to the consequences of stereotyping – stigmatization.

Drawing on the distinction between social types and stereotypes suggested by Klapp (1962), it is possible to distinguish between categorization that leads to neutral identification and the one that leads to stigmatization. In Klapp's words: '...stereotypes refer to things outside one's social world, whereas social types refer to things with which one is familiar; stereotypes tend to be conceived as functionless or dysfunctional (or, if functional, serving prejudice and conflict mainly), whereas social types serve the structure of society at many points' (in Dyer 1977: 29). Although it has also been suggested that stereotypes can have positive overtones (cf. Allport 1954: 191), it needs to be underlined that the very process which establishes members of a specific social group as an 'outgroup', simultaneously reduces them to being 'just that'. As pointed out by Dyer, 'it is significant to most aspects of who I am that I am gay but all the same it is only part of who I am; yet the label, and the very real need to make a song and a dance about it, is liable to suggest that it is all that I am, that it explains everything about me' (1993: 9). From this perspective, social groups that are most rigorously stereotyped are likely to appear to be the most 'othered' and denied variation within their group.

Based on this brief theoretical excursus, it becomes apparent that stereotypes employed in the cinema may reveal more than the simple associations between language and imagery on the one hand and social groups on the other. Approached critically, analysis of characterisation that draws on social stereotypes can work deep into the social configurations. It is important then for the following analysis to look not only at the range of stereotypes that are being employed in character construction, but also at the way they are being woven into narrative, when and under which circumstances they are brought in, and if on any occasions they are being questioned and deconstructed.

The way films make use of stereotypes is through iconography. In Dyer's terms that means that 'films use a certain set of visual and aural signs which immediately bespeak [e.g.] homosexuality and connote the qualities associated, stereotypically, with it' (1977: 31). Iconography is a kind of short-hand – it places a character quickly and economically (ibid: 32). The multimodal nature of cinema enables it to employ both linguistic and visual indexes, both of which need to be taken into account, as meanings can be derived not only from the cumulative value of correlating words and images, but also from the word's defiance of expectations set by the image and vice versa. The linguistic component of iconography is thus at once similar to and more powerful than Irvine and Gal's iconisation,

which they define as 'linguistic features that index social groups or activities [and] appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence' (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37). The interplay between word and image becomes a powerful meaning-making tool, which will be accounted for throughout the following discussion.

Cultural context is another aspect of analysis that should be given careful consideration. Stereotypes represented in the cinema are drawn from the repertoire of the society they belong to, and study of a large corpus of films could yield interesting results as to which stereotypes are the most recurrent at different time periods. The limited time period within which the films analysed below were produced determines the 'local heroes' of the time. Analysis of iconography that is derived from overt stereotypes forms the bulk of section 2, and is firmly embedded in the socio-historic realia of the post-Soviet Russia.

What is important to note, though, is that cinema not only uses but actively partakes in the circulation of stereotypes. As a public medium with wide dissemination, cinema enjoys an agentive role in consolidation and deconstruction of stereotypes, providing means for their reflexive exploration. These 'poetics – its own ways of working – and politics – the ways in which it is invested with power' (Hall 1997: 263) of stereotyping are further investigated through filmmakers' take on the most ambiguous stereotype that can exist in a society – of itself, discussion of which in section 3 will form the final part of this chapter on the use of social stereotypes in character construction.

## Section 2. Youngsters, gangsters and plebsters

The following section focuses on the way non-standard language varieties are used to construct character identities as belonging to marginalised social groups, thus relying on overt social stereotypes circulating in the given community. The discussion is based on the speech analysis of minor characters, who I define as those characters that are not shown to undergo any character changes significant for the plot and do not belong to the group of lead characters.<sup>25</sup> Minor characters may make just a single appearance, or appear in a variety of scenes throughout the film - the main requirement for their inclusion in the analysis was that in the course of the film they produce at least one utterance within which they employ non-standard lexis (NSL).

The following distribution of minor characters by film has been identified accordingly:

Title of the film	Year of release	Number of minor characters using NSL
<i>WP</i>	1993	8
<i>PNH</i>	1995	2
<i>SM</i>	1995	4
<i>B</i>	1997	9
<i>DCM</i>	1997	12
<i>I</i>	2005	6
Total		41

**Table 2.** Number of minor characters that use NSL by film.

Discrepancy between the numbers of minor characters in different films should not be taken to be of major importance, as in *PNH*, for example, the plot determines limited interaction between protagonists and the outsiders due to the remote location of the protagonists during a large part of the film. In this film, thus, the largest volume of on-screen interaction will be between the core characters, reducing the number of minor characters to a bare minimum (of which only 2 are NSL users).

---

<sup>25</sup> This derives from the Forster's definition of 'flat' characters (1927), see more in Chapter 2 section 2.1.

As was pointed to above (Chapter 2, 2.1) the role of minor characters within narrative is to aid construction of the lead characters' identities and support narrative development. Often serving as a backdrop to the protagonists' actions, they are by definition static and rely heavily on social stereotypes, which provide an efficient way to ensure quick identification that would not distract viewers' attention from the main story line. Since the audience is not provided with an opportunity to study these characters at length, they are often very iconographic in their presentation. All the information that is deemed necessary to place these characters in the social world is supplied in the most economic and efficient way, often through the interplay between the visual and verbal components. Although focusing on the linguistic realisation of stereotypes, this section will pay special attention to the visual prompts, as the anticipated correlation between speech and appearance will serve to strengthen the stereotype, while intentional discrepancies will signal the necessity for a non-conventional, perhaps, ironic, reading of the portrayed stereotype. For example, the viewers of PNH are affronted with a question: Who is the black man talking Russian slang encountered by Raivo in the Russian countryside? Is he a foreigner? A representative of Russian youth? Or maybe an alcoholic, since he is asking for some change, so he can buy a drink? The visual and verbal signs are mutually contradictory and confusing, inviting the viewer to engage in critical reassessment of the standard stereotypes. The conflict between the viewers' expectations, built up by the visual imagery, and the verbal presentation not only works to convey narrative, micro-level information, but is also a powerful means to 'stir up' the rigidity of existent stereotypes. In this case, the portrayed discrepancy was later resolved by the realisation that the most plausible explanation for the presence of a black man in the midst of the Russian countryside is that he is just one of Raivo's visions. Resolved on the micro-level, the conflict remains significant in terms of its critical interpretation of stereotyping, the instances of which are just as important for the analysis, if not more so, than those of speech conforming to the stereotype introduced by the imagery.

With regards to the linguistic aspect, the data demonstrated that identity construction of minor characters has been predominantly relying on the lexical component, with phonetic differences only serving as meaning-making tool in the case of 5 (minor) characters, of which 3 can be identified as having strong Caucasian accent (B, DCM), 1 as having a foreign (American English) accent (SM) and 1 being phonetically distinctive due to the absence of rolling 'R's in his speech (PNH), which may also be perceived characteristic of a foreign accent.

With phonetic differences not playing a significant role, the emphasis falls on the lexical component. With this in mind, the dialogues of the six films were analysed for the presence of non-standard lexis, instances of which were identified and subdivided into the following categories:

Film title	Obscenities	Argot	Slang
<i>WP</i>	8		1
<i>PNH</i>	1		1
<i>SM</i>	4	2	
<i>B</i>	7	4	1
<i>DCM</i>	4	7	5
<i>I</i>	3	2	6
Total	27	15	12

**Table 3.** Number of minor characters that use NSL by film by type of NSL.

The data analysis has shown that the regional dialectal component was practically absent from the dialogues, with NSL use confined to criminal argot, youth slang and obscenities.

Following this brief summary of the findings, I am now turning to a more in-depth discussion of how existing stereotypes of youth slang, criminal argot, and obscene language users are drawn upon in the collected data, and how these lexical subsets are employed for the construction of character identities.

### **2.1. Youth slang**

Youth slang is the easiest of non-standard language varieties to be supported by visual prompts. Age is one of the most visible personal characteristics, which not only justifies the use of certain language material, but in certain situations demands it from the user. In *I*, for example, the narrative relies heavily on the interaction between the inhabitants of an orphanage, aged 6 to 16. Interaction within and between peer-groups – the children can be roughly separated into pre-adolescents and adolescents – varies in the concentration of slang, as well as in the proportion of standard language employed. These fluctuations show the intense identity work, acutely important for this age-group, as ‘the development of the peer social order, inasmuch as it is dominated by the confined and segregated environment of the school, is fraught with conflict, competition, and emotional volatility’ (Eckert 2000: 5).

Leaving discussion of the dynamics of identity work for the next chapter, it is important to note here that the ‘particular juncture in life, and place in society, shared by the adolescent population’ is related to the adolescent age group’s lead in the use of vernacular variables (ibid: 4). The past few decades have seen academic research being undertaken in this area (e.g. Chambers 1995, Eckert 2000). The findings of these sociolinguistic / ethnographic works have shown the prominence of language variation in the speech of adolescents and young people, thus somewhat echoing a long-standing laymen’s stereotype that equates young people to slang users.

This brings us to the question of expectation in stereotypes. Striving to simplify the complexities of the social world, a stereotype generalises certain trends common in a given social group and sets expectations that all the members of this group should behave accordingly. Such are the consequences for the young people that visual belonging to the ‘younger’ age-group sets expectations of the out-group members, or viewers as is the case with films, for them to be slang users. While lead characters can show more complex patterns of speech, for reasons of time and economy minor characters are built round stereotypes. It is therefore unsurprising that youth slang becomes an integral part of the construction of characters, whose age is significant for their represented persona. Within the data collected, five of the films have minor characters that use slang, and *I* sports the largest concentration of slang usage.

With age-group belonging being the most significant visual component for setting viewers’ expectations, further iconographic features may or may not be deemed necessary. The character of Kat (*B*) presents an extremely rich example of following the ‘youth’ stereotype both visually and linguistically. Representative of the Russian youth culture of the mid-1990s, Kat ticks all the boxes: when seen outside, she is wearing asymmetric zip jacket and a boyish leather cap. At the concerts she appears with make-up on, wearing trendy clothes that at times reveal her tattoo. With film *B* revolving round Danila’s exploration of St Petersburg, Kat is relentlessly portrayed in a variety of iconic places for the youth of those times: her first appearance is made giving directions to an iconic underground club ‘Nora’, she later takes Danila to a concert in the ‘Spartak’ club, and their final encounter is at McDonald’s: as inappropriate as it may sound in the context of Western culture, in the Russia of the early post-Soviet period it has been considered a ‘cool’ and progressive place to eat at, with the first outlet of that chain opening in St Petersburg hardly a year before the release of the film. Just to complete the picture, the character of Kat also bows to the stereotype of drugs – alcohol - easy sex, while her preferred way of calling herself is an anglicised version of

Russian name Katia, and her speech is abundant in slang. Her character is drawn to represent a slice of life that Danila encounters, engages with and ultimately rejects. Kat thus becomes not just a representative of a youth scene, but the youth scene itself in all its flamboyancy of appearance, predictability of location and a very distinct manner of expression.

Despite being not as important for the narrative as Kat, a variety of other slang users that are strikingly iconographic appear in the researched corpus: the youth group (*I*) that Vania runs into is shown at their leisure with guitars and bottles of beer, Zhorzhik (*DCM*) appears unkempt with an arm round his teenage sweetheart, and Makar's (*DCM*) teenage-style behaviour in interaction with his uncle (he is being rude and obnoxious while also appearing nervous and unconfident) is underscored by the difference in their clothing: Makar's trendy leather outfit contrasts vividly with his uncle's old-fashioned grey suit jacket. So why is it important to send visual signals about these slang users when it is already apparent that these characters are representing the youth? The answer that can be forwarded is the actual heterogeneity of the youth group, which is tacitly accepted by the outgroup members and therefore works to complicate the stereotype. Age rarely serves as the only determinant of the preferred language variety, and for the connection between the age-group and the language variety to be established further supporting characteristics are required, such as active involvement with the youth subculture, lower social status, or the in-group leisure surroundings, all of which can be shown through visual prompts. When these conditions are not met, slang use stops being compliant with the stereotype, and becomes unexpected, antagonistic and thus inappropriate for the predictable patterns of behaviour that minor characters strive to re-create. In a similar way, the stereotype that connects young persons with slang use may also be defied by a character's sole use of standard language. In that case, belonging to a specific age-group becomes insignificant for the represented persona, as is the case with Nikolai's young neighbour (*WP*). This unnamed character has visual characteristics of a young person – appearance, hairstyle, clothes, John Lennon-style glasses - and yet his scarce utterances do not contain any slang. Although serving to create a visual anchor that distinguishes him from the other characters roaming the streets of Paris in the course of the film, this character's youth does not serve any narrative purpose and therefore does not need to be supported by slang. What is more, standard speech blends this character with the group of the neighbours, whereas slang would give him unnecessary prominence, shifting the emphasis away from the more significant aspects of interaction.

The stereotype that builds upon the linear connection between young ↔ slang can also be refuted by older characters employing slang in their speech. Although slang often appears in

film as the sole privilege of the young, within the data researched in this study a number of other characters are shown to be drawing on the qualities associated with slang use. The Musician (*WP*), Igor (*DCM*) and Mandrykin (*I*) all use slang within their speech despite being well outside the usual age-range of slang users. For them, middle-aged professional men, the use of slang takes on values that are contiguous but not identical to those that are drawn on in the construction of youth identities. For Mandrykin's character the main purpose of youth slang is to emphasise familiarity within the context of situation. Slang is used when addressing the colleagues and 6 year old Vania. Igor's use of the slang word *насосы* in relation to his ballet group's sponsors reveals condescending attitude, denying them the collaborative parity, which would have been expressed by the use of a standard language expression. For the musician (*WP*) in his monologue about nostalgia, the use of slang underscores his sentiments about the times when he was young, recreating the linguistic picture of those days when he still lived in Russia and been an active slang user.

Stereotypes do not necessarily have to be conformed to or defied, but can also be brought to attention through re-interpretation. In a reflexive twist of the stereotype that has been described above, depicted as something in between dream and reality, we see yet another refute of our expectations in the abovementioned scene in which Raivo meets a stranger in the midst of a Russian field. Raivo's interlocutor is full of visual contradictions: he is dressed in *ватник*, a customary quilted jacket worn by rural Russians, but carries a violin case. He talks in Russian, but is black. He also shows striking resemblance to Lenin: the same shape of glasses and the absence of rolling Rs in speech, and yet what he ultimately says is:

Простите, мне, право, неудобно беспокоить Вас, но у меня трубы  
горят, умираю совсем. Будьте добры презентовать малую сумму,  
простите за беспокойство.

(Example 1, PNH)

The unlikely combination of elevated speech style, most appropriate in the salons of the 19<sup>th</sup> century aristocracy, and modern slang.<sup>26</sup> Standing in stark contrast to one another, the

---

<sup>26</sup> *трубы горят* – refers to the feeling of intense thirst experienced during hangover, Nikitina 2009: 852.

opposition of these language varieties mimics the visual contradictions, constructing the phantasmic nature of this character. But at the same time this scene poses a question to the viewer: why are those elements considered to be in opposition to one another? Why cannot there be a black man in the Russian countryside? Why cannot a person from countryside play violin? Why, ultimately, cannot slang be used alongside elevated style? Without seeking for answer, these questions are meant to stir up the rigidity of well-established oppositions, and invite the viewer to look at them afresh.

## **2.2. Criminal argot**

A socio-professional jargon, akin to the highly-specialised lingos of some other trades, in the post-Soviet Russia criminal argot has spread well beyond its signature realm. As discussed in Chapter 1 (3), the spread of criminal argot to such areas of public speech as newspapers, radio, TV and even speeches of high-ranking politicians has been a characteristic trait of Russian language development in the 1990s and has stirred much discussion within both academic and lay circles. Brought on screens with the abolishment of censorship and increase in the numbers of gangster films, criminal argot is employed in the identity construction of minor characters in 4 of the analysed films.

The group of minor characters that was identified in the corpus as argot users does not present many surprises: all of them are in one way or another connected to the criminal world and their identities are therefore built on the conventional association of argot use with criminal involvement. Most frequently argot is employed in the speech of mafia members and hit men (71 % of the minor characters identified as argot users). New to the cinema of the 1990s, these characters and the prominence they have acquired should not be seen as a mere reflection of the quick growth of crime in the post-Soviet Russia, but first and foremost as an attempt of the cinema to make sense of these new phenomena and their role in the contemporary social world. Thus, Oushakine suggests to consider it ‘as a historically specific attempt to organize symbolically the state of outlawry: When the opposition of the legal vs. the illegal loses its normative meaning, it is the stylistic excess of the criminal order of things that is called upon to reflect the condition of social disorientation’ (2007: 358).

Visual image provides the viewer with the first cue to the identity of the character, and representation of criminals in the analysed data has indeed shown to be richly iconographic. The two criminal leaders (in *B* and *DCM*) are decorated with universal symbols of power and authority (signet ring, set of beads), and a lot of the minor characters representing the

criminal world are shown with firearms in their hand, establishing straight out their social belonging. Although mostly universal, some of the iconographic details are specific to the Russian milieu of the 1990s. To give but one example, Kruglyi (*B*) is wearing a crimson jacket, which in the 1990s was unequivocally identified with the ‘New Russians’, controversial entrepreneurial class, and taken to be the symbol of power and financial success. The other visual features that seem to be customary for the depiction of criminals are black leather jackets and heavy golden chains worn round the neck. These are not only pervasive throughout the analysed films, decorating both mafia bosses (e.g. unnamed criminal leader of Caucasian descent in *DCM*) and petty criminals, but have also become part of the Russian mafia stereotype abroad: ‘thugs in leather jackets shaking down and brutalizing helpless business owners’ (Sokolov 2004: 68). Finally, local context is important for reading into the symbolic value of Zubek’s tattoo (*DCM*). Although tattoos might be common among criminals all over the world, in this case the link is made that goes beyond the usual prison connection. Identifying the owner as a veteran of the Afghan war, Zubek’s tattoo, once noticed, immediately establishes the common ground between him and the police major Alexei Ivanovich. This unlikely re-union of a police officer and a criminal shapes further development of the narrative, but also seems to confirm rather closely Prokhorova’s observation: ‘A police unit and a gang are the two most common surrogate communities that function as compensation for the social incoherence in contemporary Russia’ (2003: 522). Indeed, Zubek and Alexei, representatives of the two opposing sides of the legal system, appear to be the only two characters in the film that are capable of upholding the ambiguous rules of the game, at the time when the others fall into chaos unleashed by the change of circumstance.

Recurrent features in depiction of criminals in the films of the 1990s may be attributed to the existence of a strong stereotype. This, however, is a questionable issue, as in the times when a new type of criminal formation appears and takes dominance in the real world its cinematic interpretation can hardly be approached simplistically as a beneficiary of the existent stereotype. Taking into consideration the mass scale of dissemination and significant influence on the viewers that cinema possesses, it is much more probable to assume its role as a partaker in the actual process of creation of this stereotype. As a matter of fact, recurrent visual and verbal characteristics of criminal characters have only congealed into the strong stereotype of a criminal as a man in black leather jacket with thick chain round his neck talking argot and often recurring to obscenities and insults towards the second half of the 1990s.

Tracing the path of formation of this stereotype within the available data, it appears that while it has strong influence on the construction of criminal identities in the films *B* and *DCM* (both 1997), earlier films do not show any sign of it. Looking at *SM* (1995), with a significant part of its plot dependent on the interaction between the legal system and the gangsters, including mafia, gives strikingly different representation of the criminal world. Among the minor characters is the habitual offender Sukhodrishev, who uses argot, but iconographically and lexically belongs to the ‘older generation’ of criminals, like Nikulin’s characters.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the mafia group in the film bears more resemblance to the Soviet comedies than to the more recent Russian gangster films. It consists of six people: four practically silent men in black suits, the leader Koziulski wearing coralline-pink (!) jacket and his right-hand man Alexei who is wearing a knitted long jacket, bow tie and a casket, and is often quoting events from the Russian criminal history. The duet Koziulski – Alexei draws on the criminal stereotypes that derive from the Soviet (or even the highly popular French) comedies. Although this can be partially attributed to the conventions of the comedy genre, the socio-historic context of film production should not be disregarded altogether. Stereotypes rely heavily on their frequent repetition, which, taking into consideration the dramatic fall in the cinematic output of the early 90s and very low numbers of the cinema-goers, in the world of the 1990s would come predominantly from television. As reported by Prokhorova until mid-1990s Russian TV production was practically non-existent and most of the airtime was filled by foreign import. Only in the mid-1990s did the first Russian crime series appear on the screens and only towards the end of the 1990s did the Russian crime series become widely accepted and watched (Prokhorova 2003). This goes some way to explaining the slow process of change that occurred in the criminal stereotyping of the early 1990s and the formation of a rather rigid image towards the end of the decade.

Taking these findings in the context of language change and attitudes described in Chapter 1 can lead us to conclude that with time the social threat posed by organised crime has been extended to the use of language associated with them, thus attributing negative, threatening characteristics to the use of argot. This caused objections to be made even with regards to the employment of argot in the films directly dealing with the criminal underworld; for example, Liubarskaia in her review of *DCM* and *DCM-2* (2005) makes multiple negative remarks

---

<sup>27</sup> Yuri Nikulin (1921-1997) is a Soviet and Russian actor and clown, who starred in many iconic comedies of the 1960s, often playing part of a petty criminal: e.g. *Операция «Б1»*, *Бриллиантовая рука* (*Diamond Arm*), etc.

concerning the abundance of criminal argot in these films. For example, she suggests that the argot sounds ‘artificial’ and that its use obscured the true meaning of interaction, since attempts at understanding were ‘brain racking’ (2005: online). This emphasises the alienating function of argot, as it has developed over the years. Rarely used by lead characters (*DCM* being an exception), the use of argot has become limited to the purposes of socially positioning and alienating minor characters, making the charismatic likeable argot-using characters like Nikulin’s Fool and Sukhodrishev from *SM* become a thing of the past.

Finally, it is important to discuss the use of criminal argot by the adolescents from the orphanage (*I*). Although not formally belonging to the criminal circles, some of the teenage characters employ argot lexis in their speech, bringing to viewers’ attention connections that exist between them and the adult underworld. Sometimes this information is overtly available, as with Irka (a teenage prostitute) and Timokha (a safecracker / burglar), while most often the police encounters of some others teenagers are only hinted at. Extension of criminal associations onto the speech of orphans engages with the orphan trope that has often recurred in Russian culture. Prokhorova reminds us that in the ‘Soviet cultural tradition, the orphan trope was consistently used in transitional periods’ (2003: 523). Important for the Soviet culture as a figure without the past, the orphan is re-interpreted in the post-Soviet period, when the search for that past becomes the search for the lost identity. Interaction between the adolescent orphans and the younger children (including the protagonist Vania) is crucial for the narrative of the film, and linguistic differences serve as an important tool that emphasises the still untainted life paths of 6 year olds as compared to their older schoolmates. Overt and covert (linguistic) connections with criminal activity and, through this, the likely social death of the orphan adolescents, as shown in the film, serve as a warning that without past there is no future. The orphan trope hence loses the component of hope unless the past is re-established, which for Vania means literally to find his Mother.

### **2.3. Obscenities**

Loathed and admired, obscenities for a Russian are more than just rude words. As neatly put by Krongauz, ‘*Mat* unites us all. Deep down inside and rather self-consciously we take pride in it’ (2008: 159). Chapter 1 (3.2.3) has already provided an insight into the ambiguous attitudes towards this lexical stratum of the Russian language, and the following data analysis provides proof of the complex identity construction values attributed to it.

Neu defines obscene language as ‘conventionally offensive and shocking words’ (2008: 123), following on to add that its shock value derives from the socially shaped attitudes. This is true with regards to the establishment of taboo subjects, which vary from one culture to another, as well as the perception of the strength of offense committed by the use of obscenities. Discrepancies in social values also determine that some social groups are deemed more likely to use obscenities than the others. Andersson and Trudgill observe that swearing is most typical of ‘individuals on the edges of society - young people, the unemployed, alcoholics and criminals (with the most peripheral last)’ (1990: 65-66). Apart from the social status, age and gender also contribute to the perceived likelihood of obscene use, with it being rather universally accepted in the Western culture that use of obscenities is more suited to men than to women, adults rather than children, peripheral social groups rather than the educated professionals.<sup>28</sup> Taking this common assumption to be the basic stereotype regarding obscene users, within the data collected I have observed that overall it has largely been drawn on in the construction of character identities: 78% of the users of obscenities are male characters, 93% are adults, 63% can be assumed to have received only basic education. 41% fully confirm to the UMA stereotype, being Uneducated Male Adults.

Belonging to the UMA group (and therefore having a *carte blanche* for the use of obscenities) is often visually emphasised by characters’ negligence in dress and appearance: e.g. Zinka’s father (*B*) appears in a dirty vest, old trousers and with uncombed hair, Ivan Kuzmich (*WP*) is similarly poorly dressed, and his awkward soft hat and worse for wear coat shown against the backdrop of Parisian streets and elegantly dressed city dwellers, underscore his low social status. Although the viewers are not given any information about his current or previous occupation, through visual prompts his interests are reduced to fishing and then marinating his catch. Low social status, both verbalised overtly and pointed to visually, is another characteristic of the group of UMA: among the obscene users we see taxi driver (*SM*), detainees (*PNH*, *SM*), gangsters (*B*, *DCM*).

Identity construction value of obscenities both within this overt stereotype and in more complex instances of obscene use depends largely on the primary purpose of their use. Drawing on research into the functions of obscene use by Montagu (1967) and Zhelvis (1997), I have identified four main functions that appear in the dataset:

---

<sup>28</sup> With regards to the perception of gender differences in the use of swearing, see Trudgill 2000 (61-81) for a sociolinguistic account, and Montagu 1967 for psychological and physiological reasoning.

- nominative: use of lexis that is generally perceived as obscene without intention to shock, often in the naming function or as a filled pause.
- cathartic: use of obscenities as a relief of emotional tension – e.g. in the heat of a fast-moving action.
- emphatic: use of obscenities for emphasis, bringing attention to the subject of speech through reliance on the shock value of obscenities.
- reflexive: obscene use when an obscene item itself becomes central to the statement, either as a playful appropriation for humorous effect, or as a subversive tool, or as an object of interest per se.

It appears that within the main UMA stereotype, the use of obscenities is restricted to the first two functions: nominative and cathartic. The former is predominantly employed in brief encounters with certain minor characters (e.g. taxi driver in *WP*, detainee in *PNH*), and serves as a shortcut to their identity. The latter is frequent in the action scenes, which are more often than not populated by adult males.

The stereotype can be further investigated through instances of deviation. Looking at its function in speech of uneducated females (15%), we see obscenities used in their nominative form. Sharing with the UMA stereotype the identity construction value that serves as a link to the low social status, this finding also points at the absence of females from action scenes. In case of underaged users (7%), the use of obscenities can be linked to the cathartic and emphatic functions. It can be further stated that in these cases the defiance of stereotype, which links obscene use with adulthood, has been employed by the filmmaker to emphasise the position of children outside the normal children's world. The following example is taken from the scene, where Vania (*I*) is attacked by two stray kids, who demand that he takes off his jacket and trousers. Vania is lingering, clutching at his book, and then suddenly throws sand into their eyes, provoking their last utterance:

(SK1) Чё расселся? В песочек решил поиграть? Чего копаешься?  
 (SK2) А книга тебе зачем? Он у нас умный, по книжке штаны  
 снимать будет.  
 (SK1) Ах ты, блядь\*, убью, сука\*.

(Example 2, I)

Cathartic use of obscenities by stray kids (*I*) makes the scene more acute. Those stray children, just a little bit older than Vania, have been using the 'adult' language of obscenities

in the earlier threats as means to position themselves as superior to Vania, but his ability to outwit them leaves them with just the cathartic use for the obscene words, repositioning them not as aggressors but as social victims themselves. As to the presence of obscenities in the speech of orphan teenagers (*I*), its use for emphatic purposes can be linked to the dominance of slang in the everyday talk of this age-group. Slang's primary orientation towards expression of attitude creates similarities with the emphatic use of obscenities; however, the shock value associated with obscene use increases when employed by those outside the UMA stereotype and through this adolescents' untimely involvement with the grown-up world is emphasised.

Finally, I have looked at the way obscenities add to the identity construction of educated minor characters (37%). Interestingly, their speech includes all four functions of obscene use, thus showing the ability to use the full spectrum of registers. Generally speaking, the use of obscenities by educated speakers defies viewer expectations and thus strengthens the effect of the utterance. This becomes especially prominent when obscenities are used in the emphatic function, as in the following example:

(Ksiusha) Какой, блядь\*, балет...

(Example 3, DCM)

Faced with the imminent departure of her boyfriend, who has announced he was leaving for his home Makhachkala (Dagestan), but does not want to take Ksiusha with him, since he believes that she will be an alien in the world of his people, Ksiusha, a professional ballet dancer, cries, reasons, and finally explodes with the statement above. Contrasting sharply with her earlier depiction as a tender, elegant and sophisticated lady, this utterance emphasises the extreme resentment towards ballet she feels at that moment.

A similar effect of increased tension may be created by the use of obscenities by educated speakers for cathartic purposes. This, however, should be considered alongside the fact that the need for catharsis in certain situations is universal for all humans, with the strongest expressions being resorted to by speakers from all walks of life when the relief is deemed needed. When the music director (*B*), seeing a stranger entering the music video shoot, yells at him and the crew, the use of obscenities thus serves the primary purpose of emphasising the emotional tension, even though the tension is felt more acutely because of the high social status of the speaker.

(Director) Стоп! Кто пустил сюда этого уроды? Дармоеды! Да выкиньте его на хер\* отсюда, за что вам деньги платят?

(Example 4, B)

In the case of the nominative use of obscenities, the function they serve in the speech of educated characters is to create an atmosphere of familiarity. Once the social and / or educational status is established, the presumed ability to use a variety of registers allows educated speakers to employ obscenities in interaction with their peers, as long as it is shown not to shock the addressee.

(Musician) Да ты посмотри на эти самые морды. Это ж французы. Они же деревянные. Они тупые как дерево, как пробки.  
(Nikolai) Ну тихо, тихо. Ну не все же...  
[...]  
(Nikolai) А Вольтер? А Бизе?  
(Musician) Точно такие же мудаки\*. Креветки с лимоном.

(Example 5, WP)

Here the use of an obscenity *мудак*\* within the conversation between two male adults is sanctioned not only by highly negative attitude towards the French, expressed by the speaker, but also his feeling of unity with his compatriot and fellow musician, aggravated by alcohol (the scene takes place at a restaurant). *Мудак*\* hence becomes more than just an insult to the French, but also a symbol of commonality, affirmation of the ingroup membership, within which it is possible to share negative opinions, as well as a specific register.

Most interesting, though, is the reflexive use of obscenities by educated speakers. The best example of this is the use of Russian obscenities by Jennifer, wife of the American Ambassador (*SM*). I will discuss further implications of this character, alongside other foreign characters, in the last section of this chapter, but what is important with regards to the current discussion is the value of her use of obscenities for the character identity. A stranger to the farce and chaos of post-Soviet Russian life, as well as the complex relations between police and the underworld that the film's plot revolves around, Jennifer's interest is presented to the viewers as 'researching contemporary Russian folklore'. Her character is constructed precisely through the obscenities that she first repeats (with strong American accent and unbeatable admiration):

(Piskunov) Суходрищев, сейчас глаз на жопу\* натяну...  
(Jennifer) Глаз на джопу... гениально!

(Example 6, SM)

... and then produces herself in defence against an attempt of the police officers to detain her and her husband:

(Jennifer) Оборзел, совсем? [inaudible] позорные, фармазоны  
лабрадорские. Глаза в жопу\* вставлю.

(Example 7, SM)

Through obscenities, this sophisticated American lady engages with the Russian (low) culture, ending up in voicing the critique of her own compatriot:

(Carol) Люди, мы уходить заниматься секс. Мы ненадолго — мы  
возвращаться. Люди, веселитесь!  
(Jennifer) Слаба на передок...

(Example 8, SM)

Obscenities can thus be a very strong character construction tool, where both adherence and defiance of socially perceived stereotype can be used as a meaning-making device within a film. The points of tensions within this stereotype are between male and female, adult and underaged, uneducated and educated, and positive vs negative values of either of these elements, as well as the visual imagery supporting it, affects the purpose of use and viewers' reactions.

### **Section 3. Russian self-stereotyping**

The final type of stereotyping that needs to be discussed concerns self-stereotyping. Although it is commonly agreed among scholars that stereotyping only applies to the outgroup members, whereas ingroups are seen as ‘variegated and complex’ (cf. Rothbart et al. 1984, Hewstone & Giles 1997), reflexive self-stereotyping is nevertheless an existing phenomenon in high performance. This follows from Bell and Gibson’s observation that in staged performance ‘there is heightened reflexivity – social stereotypes can be explicitly put on display, offering a space for critical reflection on self and society’ (2011: 558). Ample opportunities provided by the medium of film for such explorations include, among others, representation of stereotyping of the own social group by outgroup members, which gives an opportunity for the viewers and filmmakers alike to identify and reflect upon the grain of truth that exists in such stereotypes. Believing that this phenomenon is worthy of investigation, in the following section I will look at how stereotypes of the filmmakers’ own nation have been brought to attention through interaction between its members and the foreigners.

Characters representing foreigners (Americans, Italians, French and a Finn) appear in 5 out of the 6 analysed films, and in three of the films the interaction between Russian and foreign characters plays a key role in the narrative development. Although not planned initially to become part of the current analysis, this interaction has been shown to rely heavily on the reflexive use of language, and this led to the decision to look further into the value of socially imbued meanings that are being drawn on for the construction of Russian identity stereotypes. Importantly for this research, insults and obscenities are often shown as means of communication between Russian and foreign characters, and through this are attributed meanings that go beyond their traditional functions. The social significance of these language strata, pointed to in the previous sections, is exaggerated and foregrounded, constituting part of the Russian stereotype that is brought to the viewers’ attention through the words and actions of foreign characters. Being thus relevant for this study both through the linguistic material that is employed in the instances of inter-national interaction, and through its focus on stereotypes, dialogues between Russian and foreign characters will provide grounds for the following discussion. It will be attempted to shed light on the construction of Russian self-stereotypes – including both linguistic and iconographic aspects of them – as it is shown in the films, as well as the role of foreign characters in bringing out these stereotypes.

In the context of social change that was happening in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the search for identity was natural and pervasive. It should not come as a surprise then that it is in the earlier films of that epoch that foreign characters take on the most importance. Of the data researched in this thesis, films from 1993 (*WP*) and 1995 (*PNH* and *SM*) are the ones to put most emphasis on the interaction between Russians and foreigners. Unlike in the 2005 production *I*, where the Italian couple serves a well-defined role in the narrative, being Vania's potential adopters, and do not get involved in any discussions relating to the Russian stereotype (apart from a comment on the weather being cold), foreigners in these earlier films do not enter the narrative as representatives of their specific nation, but, to a much larger extent, step in to stereotype the Russians they encounter, giving the filmmaker an opportunity to engage with these stereotypes through imagery and dialogues in a self-reflexive and critical vein. Crucial for the understanding of these encounters is the fact that the Russians as a social group are not being constructed as an outgroup by outsiders (as it is made to appear on screen), but reflected upon by the Russians themselves - film directors, scriptwriters, and in *SM* even the actors. The stereotypes shown in films do not pertain to the foreign view of the Russians, but to the view of Russians *assumed* to be the foreign view by Russians themselves. Struggling to form a solid sense of identity, films of the early post-Soviet period become a journey of self-exploration, whose starting points have in these cases been given by the existing stereotypes. Observing this connection between the lack of well-defined national identity and self-stereotyping, blogger Max Bears makes a self-reflexive comment, which appears strangely in line with the self-stereotyping represented in the early post-Soviet cinema: 'Living off the remains of the Soviet culture, Russians hold on to the cute little stereotypes they force onto themselves as identity. They are no big fans of their own history, ashamed of their oil-based economy, unhappy and dissatisfied. That's why they might be finding some solace in brown bears, caviar, vodka, khokhloma and matreshkas' (2012: online). Not so much khokhloma and matreshkas, but definitely vodka, lavish food and swearing: these are the basis for the Russian identity as it is being portrayed through the eyes of foreigners in the filmic material researched.

I would like first to look at the imagery associated with Russians in the films where the foreign characters are attributed significant roles, as certain themes frequently recur, forming recognisable patterns. For example, foreigners are often portrayed as witnesses (either as non-participating onlookers, or even protesters) of illegal actions, performed by the Russians. Petty thefts, hunting without a license or even the use of military aircraft for transportation of a cow (*PNH*) are all done in obvious bypass of the law, even though not

necessarily intended as malevolent deeds. The fact that in *PNH* the police officer that comes to investigate the source of reported disruption, lets the offenders off and covers up for them after having been offered vodka and asked to join them at the table, becomes just one example of what Prokhorova observes as ‘communal, moral, and emotional, rather than a legal, foundation for Russian justice’ (2003: 515), for which there are multiple examples throughout the data.

Finn Raivo in *PNH* becomes an unintentional witness of a string of absurdly illegal situations, and his position as an outsider is emphasised by frequent references to his international status:

(Raivo) Your army is very big.  
(Zhenia) Anything wrong with it?  
(Raivo) No, I am only saying ...  
(Kuzmich) А ну кончайте не по-нашему болтать. Секретная часть все-таки!

(Example 9, PNH)

The position of a foreigner as an onlooker is thus acknowledged, albeit being seen as a source of potential threat both to the Russians (as in the example above), and to the foreigner himself, who thus is deemed to be in need of protection:

(Raivo) Zhenya, I'll take a walk.  
(Zhenya) Don't get lost / *С местными не разговаривай. Для них иностранец в диковинку. Ещё за шпиона могут принять. [Russian voice over]*

(Example 10, PNH)

When the illegal actions are not just overlooked by the foreigners, but protested against, a thoroughly different response is evoked. In such instances the protesters are often being punished by the transgressors themselves – thus, the French trying to stop the misdeeds of the inhabitants of the infamous flat (*WP*) are locked out on the other side of the door – in chaos and lawlessness of the post-Soviet St Petersburg, where they are eventually detained by the police and later rescued by those same Russians. Even the American ambassador in *SM* cannot escape conflict with the police, since his authority to protect the citizens of his country is questioned, and his identity is doubted altogether:

(Суходрищев) Капитан! Этого пидера в Химках видал.  
Деревянными членами торгует...

(Example 11, SM)

Various attributes of illegal actions, as well as the presence of the police, thus form a pervasive image that characterises interactions between Russians and foreigners.

The other common setting for interaction is a feast which foreigners are invited to join in with: an abundance of food, lots of vodka, either for an occasion (wedding in SM), or as a feature of Russian everyday life. The foreigners are often portrayed as voicing unwillingness to be part of these events, but their opinion is rarely acknowledged:

(Vera) Ну-ка... Она же больная вся... Бедненькая... Она ж голодная! Пошли к нам?  
(Gorokhov) Давай пойдем, у нас закуска, выпивка, чего мы тут...  
(Vera) Пошли-пошли...  
(Nicole) (protests in French)  
(Nikolai) Вы что, вы что, не чувствуете что ли... Вы что, не видите, что она не пойдет. Не хочет. Уйдите.  
(Gorokhov) Хорошо-хорошо. Не хочет — не надо. Как говорят у нас на Руси: если гора не идет к Магомету, то Магомет идет к горе.

(Example 12, WP)

In this exchange, Nicole's protests against Gorokhovs' idea of curing illness with liquors and food is silenced through her inability to talk the same language as them. Ill, tired and ultimately foreign, she is unable to stop this feast from happening, and soon there is a room full of people, food, drinks, as well as music and singing. The feast which was meant to make her better, but which ultimately impinges on her territory and ignores her persona, emphasises the cultural differences not least through her alienated presence.

Critical references to illegal actions and excessive vodka-drinking are found not only in the foreigners' comments, but also as reflexive self-accusations of Russian characters:

(Musician) Вот оно, ваше российское ханжество. Всё святых из себя строите. А сами вор на воре. Всё развалили. Водку жрать и материться — вот ваша нравственность. Говорите одно, думаете другое, делаете третье.

(Example 13, WP)

(Lev) Пьёте, да? И пьёте и пьёте, и пьёте, и пьёте... Всё пропили.  
Думаете что, кончилась Россия, да? Во! Во! Вот тебе! Бойтесь  
чего-то, да? Спасения в ней ищите? Что вы в ней нашли?  
Сплошной яд.

(Example 14, PNH)

In these and similar statements vodka-drinking is conceived of as part of the unique Russian tradition, devotion to which distinguishes the Russian nation from the others. And yet, in all of the films foreigners are shown to eventually resign themselves to participating in the proposed feasts, thus establishing the uniting power of Russian vodka and food.

Another feature that characterises interaction between Russian and foreign characters relates directly to the use of language. Data analysis has revealed that foreigners not only engage with Russian culture through participation in non-verbal traditions, but also through the use of the least 'learner-friendly' language stratum: obscenities. Nicole in *WP* and Jennifer in *SM* both start off as alienated listeners to the Russian swearing, only to later employ obscenities in their own speech to address the Russians. This gradual transition from the position of overhearer to the role of interlocutor is best illustrated by the scene in which Nicole (*WP*), tired of listening in to the squabbles between the Russians that happen on her roof top terrace, tried to state her position by writing out a few Russian words she picked up from the book on a big poster: *Я хотеть просить перестать шуметь я вызывать полиция*. This polite albeit stern inscription gives, however, only momentary relief, and the row recommences anew in just few seconds. It is then that Nicole takes out a Russian phrase-book and vents her frustration by venturing into a long list of obscene insults:

(Nicole) Засранка! Идиотка! Блядь\*! Мерзавец! Дурак! Сволочь\*!  
Блядь\*! Говно\*! Бандиты!

(Example 15, WP)

She then becomes ratified as a valid interlocutor: Vera, who had previously only referred to Nicole indirectly, comes out and takes her turn in this mini-conversation, shouting *And how about that?*, pulling up her skirt to reveal the tightly clad bottom in an obscene move. Although unsuccessful in terms of reaching agreement, this exchange becomes the first instance which can be formally considered a conversation between the Russian and the French sides in this film. Obscenities thus become a means of communication, ensuring the answer from otherwise unresponsive addressees.

The fact that the foreigners are shown to converge to the speech style of the Russian characters proves the potential for dialogue. As a matter of fact, almost all interactions shown in the analysed films lead to felicitous exchanges, with media ranging from the English-speaking mediators (*PNH*, *B*, *I*) to phrase-books (*WP*) and efforts to master the Russian language (*SM*). The fact that obscenities also become such a medium, on par with the non-linguistic medium of vodka-drinking, constructs them as well-established cornerstones of the Russian identity (cf. mentioned above accusation of the Musician in *WP* that all Russians do is ‘drink vodka and swear’), which need to be engaged with in order to successfully interact with representatives of the Russian nation. In comparison, the occasional impossibility of such dialogue is expressed in *B*, when Danila fails to engage in any meaningful dialogue with the French musician (this scene will be further discussed in Chapter 5, 3.1.). What needs to be noted, though, is that unlike multiple examples from *PNH*, where Raivo’s inability to speak Russian does not preclude conversations with Russian speakers (often, through the medium of excessive vodka-drinking), in *B* the conversation is impossible because of no interest either of the speakers have to make an effort to understand the other. The international dialogue is thus portrayed as possible only in the cases of mutual interest and / or need for cooperation, but once those are established, various means become possible.

For the foreign characters that are central to the plot such an interest becomes the entry point to the interaction, and is often presented to the viewers in form of an easily recognisable stereotype. For Jennifer (*SM*), that is the illogical beauty of Russian obscenities. For Nicole (*WP*) it is the impertinence and rudeness of the people. For Raivo (*PNH*), who is introduced to the viewers as interested in Tolstoy-style hunting traditions, but is quickly made to realise that Russian hunting is much more about excessive vodka-drinking than about the hunt itself, the entry point is even more complex: it is the substitution of one stereotype (imaginary) with another one (based on reality). All of them are shown to adjust to and later engage with these stereotypes, opening up to the Russian culture. This path of negation, exploration and acceptance should not, however, be taken as the unique prerogative of those foreign characters, as they ultimately represent an attempt of the filmmakers to reflect on the existent stereotypes, calling for the need to approach them critically, expand where necessary, and confirm when true. Inviting the viewer to look at Russian customs with the eyes of an outsider, the filmmakers, however, cannot be fully detached from the social group they are criticising. Just like the custom of excessive vodka-drinking (especially in *PNH*), swearing is represented in a compassionate style, bringing to attention not only the existence of such

'vices' (or, possibly, imperfections) within Russian society as vodka-drinking, swearing and disrespect for the law, but also the pervasive laissez-faire attitude to it.

The image of Russians thus constructed can be summarised as 'uncivilised but likable'. Realised through a range of visual and verbal tools, this self-exploratory image is presented to the viewer through the words, reactions and interactions of the foreign characters. They thus become not so much characters in their own right, but mirrors for the Russians and Russian society to look into and confirm that 'we are not the same'. The reflexive stance that determines such scenes is of high importance for the exploration of the self that both Russian filmmakers and viewers engage in, and non-standard lexis becomes one of its key elements.

## Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that in films the meaning-making potential of non-standard lexis can draw on local stereotypes in a variety of ways, both exploiting the indexical connections between language and social groups in order to facilitate characterisation, and foregrounding stereotypes in a reflexive manner, calling for the need to question and reinterpret what is often taken for granted.

The analysis has identified several types of social stereotypes that can become operational in the cinematic discourse. First of all, there is the overt use of stereotypes in construction of minor character identities. Here the types of lexis conventionally associated with the young, criminals and ‘uneducated male adults’ have been employed to create shortcuts to the targeted identities. Importantly, these stereotypical connections are deeply situated in the socio-historical context. Thus, not only are stereotypes culture-bound and require awareness of the cultural symbols pertaining to the particular milieu, but with the temporal gap separating the viewers from the films’ production time, some of the visual indexes may fade or disappear from the social consciousness altogether, as is undoubtedly the case with McDonald’s having been seen in 1996 as a ‘place to be’ for trend-watching and progressive youth.

An important role in the construction of meanings in the cinema belongs to the interplay between indexical linguistic features and the associated visual imagery. Costumes, actors’ appearance, setting can all determine if the stereotype pointed to by the character’s speech is to be taken at face value, reinterpreted, or refuted altogether. Discrepancies between the visual and the aural modalities provide an intriguing ground for research, as along with the viewer who is invited to reinterpret the foregrounded stereotype, the researcher gets the chance to reveal the social configurations that stand behind conventional indexicality. Deviation from the norm (e.g. slang-speaking foreigner, argot-talking child, swearing female) brings to our attention the actual rigidity of boundaries established by social categories, as well as their arbitrary nature that rests on the attitudinal conventions. Cinema thus uses the refutation of audience expectations on a variety of levels: to create meanings on the micro-level, as well as to draw attention to the ‘good’ (e.g. a black man, visually presented as a foreigner, but verbally blended with the Russians through talking slang) and to the ‘ugly’ (e.g. social drama of stray boys opened up to the viewers through their use of obscenities) sides of social life.

The reflexivity characteristic of all types of mediated performance is most salient in representation of the outgroup stereotyping of the own group. Despite Russians often joking that the foreign view of Russia reduces it to bears and vodka, the self-image constructed in the analysed dataset has not been vastly different. Interactions between Russian and foreign characters have been framed by involvement in illegal actions, eating, vodka-drinking and swearing. Criticisms of these ‘peculiarities’ of Russian life were voiced by both Russian and foreign characters, however, despite their obvious reflexive significance, and especially so in the context of the pervasive search for identity characteristic of the early post-Soviet cinema, it can be said to relate to the sympathetic, ingroup view, thus devoid of objectivism of the actual foreigners. The view of Russians shown in the films is ultimately the Russian view of themselves, albeit with an attempt to look at themselves through foreign eyes. Underlying affection for traditions and customs is revealed through the fact that the foreign characters, however critical they appear to be in the beginning, are shown to eventually converge to the Russian ways along the lines of the constructed stereotype, vodka-drinking and swearing being shown as the most efficient ways to establish felicitous interaction.

It can thus be concluded that the relationship between films and stereotypes is two-directional. On the one hand, stereotypes circulating in the society are frequently employed to provide shortcuts to character identities, and this face-value repetition works to consolidate them. On the other hand, films were also demonstrated to be active partakers in the process of stereotype reinterpretation and rejection. Creating stark contrasts between visuals and accompanying language defies viewers’ expectations and stirs up the taken-for-granted stereotypes.

## **Chapter 5. The dynamics of characterisation: identity work**

### **Introduction**

The present chapter continues the analysis of language variation employed in film dialogues, shifting the focus onto the dynamic dimension of characterisation. It follows from the previous chapter, which explored the use of social stereotypes, and elaborates on the links between language and society observed in the instances of character identity styling, which are more complex than direct stereotyping. Looking at the occurrences of slang, argot and obscene items in on-screen interaction, it examines what strategies are used by the filmmakers to create sociolinguistic difference between the characters, and what functions these strategies perform.

The analysis of the static dimension of characterisation (Chapter 4) concerned itself with the use of stable connections between certain types of lexis (e.g. slang, argot, obscenities) and corresponding social groups (youth, criminals, uneducated). It revealed that the use of language variation by the filmmaker, even within the static dimension, is more agentive than often believed: characterisation was shown to be enhanced not only through the direct use of stable connections, but also through refutation of conventional stereotypes. It was thus shown that existing social stereotypes set viewers' expectations and through this provide useful shortcuts to the stereotypical identities often employed by the filmmakers. The use of language variation that defies these stereotypes appears as more marked and can be used for more dramatic effects. The analysis looked specifically at realisation of minor character identities, identifying a number of instances when viewer expectations were defied through intentional discrepancies between the visual and the linguistic identity construction components. In the present chapter I will expand on the agentive use of language variation, looking in more detail at how the characters are shown to construct and negotiate their identities through the manipulation of social connotations of non-standard language.

This chapter extends analysis to include all instances of characterisation through the use of non-standard lexis. I posit their linguistic realisation in the film dialogues to be the cinematic representation of identity work process. The notion of identity, central to the social constructionist field of research (cf. Introduction), is approached as the product of interaction, and thus the focus of this chapter is set on the way characters are shown to construct their relative positions in the film discourse. Since the use of lexical variation for

the purpose of characterisation in films has to date received very little scholarly attention, no conclusive comparison can be drawn with similar studies in other languages or cultures. A rare exception is a very recent paper by Androutsopoulos (2012), who presents findings of his sociolinguistic study of a multilingual film that depicts the life of Turks in a German town. Drawing on the analysis of repertoire, characters and scenes, he concludes that the film succeeds in constructing a differentiated representation of the Turkish community, while at the same time relying heavily on the mainstream ideologies of language and ethnicity, class, generation and gender (2012: 322). This brings to the fore the interplay between structure and agency characteristic of identity work, as well as the fact that structural elements are brought into cinematic narrative agentively, and hence should not be taken at face value. In Androutsopoulos's words, 'cinematic indexicalities may well rely on empirically evidenced indexical orders, but recontextualise them in the conditions and for the requirements of cinematic discourse' (2012: 321).

The analysis of the dynamic dimension of characterisation employs sociolinguistic methods for examining the linguistic means of identity construction. Positing language to be the repository of meaning-making resources, Coupland considers that individuals style their identities through agentive use of these resources (e.g. 2007). Following Coupland, in this chapter I conduct an analysis of how character identities in the six films are styled by means of language variation. Strategies and functions of language variation are identified through careful study of film dialogues, which goes beyond words to include where necessary analysis of film imagery, sound and macro-context of film narrative. The aim is to show the wide spectrum of functions that are performed by non-standard lexis in character identity styling by examining the dataset derived from the six films. The chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, I will outline the approach to identity that is being drawn on, and will introduce differentiation between the two levels of identity work: interpersonal and ideational. This distinction permits explanation of how characters can be shown to relate themselves not only to their interlocutor, but also to discourses and social configurations. Then the data analysis section delivers the results of the analysis, presenting a taxonomy of strategies and functions of the use of non-standard language. The results are split into two major categories, pertaining to the interpersonal and ideational levels. The interpersonal level is further split into two subsections, presenting separate analyses of the cinematic representation of peer-group and hierarchical relations. Then I summarise the results to demonstrate how language variation can be approached as a tool of character identity construction.

## Section 1. On-screen identity work

Positioning this study within the social constructionist field of research, I assume identity to be a dynamic rather than static phenomenon, the product of interaction rather than the constitutive force behind it. Such approach to research on identity was explored in the Introduction with views of Butler (e.g. 1990), Coupland (e.g. 2007) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005) deemed most relevant for the current study. In the context of film discourse, the process of character identity construction assumes pivotal importance. Having discussed in the previous chapter how the construction of minor characters draws on social stereotypes, thus making use of the stable connections between language and society, it is now necessary to look into the dynamics of identity construction through investigation of the cinematic representation of character identity work.

I would like to start by outlining the key aspects of identity construction as conceptualised within the broader field of sociolinguistics, and then apply it to the cinematic discourse. Conceiving of identity as emergent in interaction implies that the emphasis is laid on the process. In the field of sociolinguistics a number of approaches has been developed to address the process by which an individual's speech style is modified depending on conditions and desired outcomes of a speech event, some of which were reviewed in Chapter 1 (e.g. audience design, accommodation theory). Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's acts of identity framework (1985) provides a useful summary of the process: 'The individual creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behaviour so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, or so as to be unlike those from who he wishes to be distinguished' (1985: 181). This definition brings to attention several key aspects: agentivity and intermittency (cf. 'from time to time') of the process, as well as its reliance on the indexical orders of everyday life (cf. Blommaert 2007). This has found further development in Bucholtz and Hall's 2005 article, who also make the following observation: 'Any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant to interaction' (2005: 606). Setting out identity work as the interplay between structure and agency, Bucholtz and Hall call for the need to account for the ways that both influence individual instances of identity work ('interactional negotiation' vs. 'larger ideological processes'). Finally, Bucholtz & Hall proclaim that 'identity is the social positioning of self and other' (2005: 586), which brings to attention the fact that identity

work is always relational. It is in interaction that agency and structure are either activated or backgrounded, depending on the purpose and context of interaction.

What can be derived from this, for the purpose of current research, is that interaction is the primary locus of identity emergence, and therefore it is in the dialogues that the linguistic strategies of identity construction can be identified. In order to account for the influences of both structure and agency, it is important to consider the multiple facets of identity work. Albeit often present simultaneously, two aspects of identity work can be distinguished, labelled here as interpersonal and ideational.<sup>29</sup> These categories, it is suggested, can be applied productively to the analysis of lexical variation in film dialogues, with two methodological reservations. First, as has been extensively discussed before, in on-screen interaction the characters' use of linguistic resources is the product of filmmakers' decisions. Perceived agency needs to be considered in terms of representational purposes: characters do not employ a style shift because they wish to project a certain identity, but because the filmmaker considers it to be pertinent for the purposes of characterisation or narrative development. Heightened intentionality thus associated with the filmmaking process favours analysis of the use of linguistic varieties in terms of 'strategies' and 'functions', enabling us to identify the aspects of non-standard that are drawn on in the construction of character identities. The second point derives from the first, and concerns the fact that due to differences between the everyday speech production and the process of filmmaking 'sociolinguistic difference in film is not a straightforward transfer of social meanings of ordinary language use but an outcome of their recontextualisation within the constraints of cinematic discourse' (Androutsopoulos 2012: 302). This, as further suggested by Androutsopoulos 'requires engaging with the social action represented in a film' (ibid), and in the following analysis will be achieved through careful attention to the macro-context of interaction, including analysis of individual character development across the full length of the film, and attention to the overall message of the film.

---

<sup>29</sup> McInnes and Corlett (2012) suggest analysing identity work in institutional settings according to two aspects: interpersonal and ideational/discursive. These are the names that with minor alteration I decided to adopt in this study, however, the idea of differentiation between the different aspects of identity work is similar to Goffman's frames (1974), of which he names three: socio-cultural, genre and interpersonal.

In accordance with these considerations, in this chapter I set out to analyse the strategies and functions of language variation employed in the scripts of the six films in order to represent the dynamics of character identity work, by looking at its two aspects: interpersonal and ideational. Assuming construction of interpersonal dynamics to be the key for narrative development, I start by looking at the interpersonal aspect of identity work. The emphasis here will fall on the 'positioning of self and other' on the local scale, with film characters shown to employ language variation in order to negotiate their identity in relation to their interlocutor. The ideational aspect of identity work, on the other hand, accounts for the way characters relate themselves to the ideas and discourses that circulate in the given society. The analysis will hence engage with the social configurations and their representation in the film discourse.

## Section 2. Interpersonal level

The following section focuses on the way language variation is employed in films to represent the dynamics of identity work within the interpersonal frame. Like in the previous chapter, the analysis draws from a dataset derived from the film dialogues; however, the unit of analysis is in the following section defined as a verbal exchange which includes the use of slang, argot or obscene items by (at least) one of the speakers. Although on rare occasions such units only consist of one line, as is the case with short conversations over the phone in which the respondent's input is not lexicalised, or a comment addressed to an absent character, it has often been deemed necessary to conceive of a unit of analysis as a prolonged sequence of utterances, in order for it to be able to adequately contextualise and situate the represented process of identity work. Such an approach has also enabled us to determine if the use of language varieties within an exchange is consistent or shifting, and if (and if so, how) that creates lexical contrasts between the speakers. Thus, both inter- and intra-speaker variation has been taken into account.

With the main focus of this section falling onto the issue of interpersonal relations, it was considered necessary to further subdivide the analytical discussion into two subsections, looking separately into identity work within peer-group and hierarchical relations. This is based on the hypothesis that the use of non-standard within peer groups mainly focuses on construction of ingroup and outgroup belonging, negotiating the boundaries which separate self from other, and face-work. Within hierarchical relations major importance is attributed to the establishment, exercise and subversion of power roles.

The following distribution of units of identity work analysis by type of relations between the speakers and by film has been identified:

Name of the film	Year of release	Peer-group relations	Hierarchical relations
<i>Окно в Париж</i> (WP)	1993	16	7
<i>Особенности национальной охоты</i> (PNH)	1995	17	4
<i>Ширли-Мырли</i> (SM)	1995	10	23
<i>Брат</i> (B)	1997	15	15
<i>Мама не горюй</i> (DCM)	1997	30	25
<i>Итальянец</i> (I)	2005	11	23
Total		99	97

**Table 4.** Number of unit of analysis of identity work that employs language variation by film.

The total number of units included in the following analysis, derived from the six films, amounted to 196, with near-even distribution between the instances of peer-group and hierarchical identity work. Although inadvertently creating a balanced dataset for research, it needs to be noted that within each of the films the distribution is far from being even. As a matter of fact, most films seem to favour one type of interpersonal relation over another. This correlates closely with the development of the story-line: thus, the focus on the tightly knit group of friends in *PNH* and the context of their vacation on a remote island determines the instances of peer-group identity work outweighing hierarchical relations fourfold (17 – 4). Similar situation can be witnessed in *WP*, where the plot revolves round the adventures of a group of neighbours. On the opposite end of the spectrum are located *I* and *SM*. In *I* the narrative focus is on the relations between the orphan children and the adults, which determines the prevalence of hierarchical relations. What is more, even the group of orphans itself includes a rigid hierarchical structure within it, with a well-defined leader Kolian and the more authoritative position of adolescents in interaction with younger children. In *SM* the pivotal importance of hierarchical identity work is determined by the film's focus on the interactions between militia and gangsters, including mafia which has a hierarchy of its own. Near even distribution of peer-group and hierarchical encounters in *B* and *DCM*, it can be suggested, derives from the single figures standing at the core of the narrative. Danila (*B*) and Artur (*DCM*) engage in a variety of interactions, both within their peer groups and within hierarchies of various sorts. Danila's search for his own identity among the available identity patterns realised through the language used in his characterisation will become the focus of close investigation at several points in the course of the following analysis.

### **2.1. Peer groups**

Peer groups are conceived of here as groups of people who engage in interaction on the grounds of shared interests or background. These groups can be of either predetermined (e.g. family, work, neighbours) or voluntary (e.g. friends) membership. This definition is thus broader than the one more commonly used in sociolinguistic research to refer to the single age-cohort groups (cf. Eckert 1989, Coupland, Coupland & Giles 1991), and includes commonality that transcends the age boundaries. What follows from this definition is that within such groups hierarchies are not institutionalised and therefore any existing boundaries are of a more fleeting nature, being more open to negotiations and subversion, with their transgression not being punishable in a clearly defined manner. Interactions within peer groups, therefore, place significant emphasis on the establishment and confirmation of

commonality, on the one hand, and on the construction and negotiation of boundaries, on the other.

Within the analysed dataset the following peer groups were identified: family (blood relatives as well as couples), friends, acquaintances, neighbours, co-workers (including same-level members of a mafia group and gangsters), and other equals (in terms of their social standing e.g. age, occupational background).

	Family	Friends	Acquaintances	Neighbours	Co-workers	Other equals	Total, units of analysis
St ->NSL	9	13	13	5	6	3	49
NSL	6	5	3	2	6	6	28
Non-conv. Diff	5	4	3	3	1	1	17
NSL -> Standard	1	1		1	2		5
Total	21	23	19	11	15	10	99

**Table 5.** Distribution of characterisation strategies by type of peer group.

In order to effectively discuss the way slang, argot and obscenities were employed for the cinematic representation of identity work that draws on the rich meaning-making potential of language variation, it was deemed necessary to pay attention to instances of both inter- and intra-speaker variation. Four identity construction strategies have thus been identified:

- 1) Intentional non-convergent difference in speakers' speech styles, where one (or more, but not all) of the speakers is shown to be consistently using language varieties other than standard.
- 2) Shift into standard, when one of the speakers is shown to shift their speech style to approximate the norms of the standard language, therefore excluding slang, argot and obscene items that were characteristics of their previous utterances.
- 3) Shift into non-standard, when one of the speakers is shown to shift their speech style to include slang, argot and obscene items.
- 4) Common use of non-standard, when all of the speakers are shown to be speaking the same non-standard language variety.

These will now be discussed one by one, in order to formulate the functions assigned by filmmakers to the instances of language variation in the process of linguistic construction and negotiation of character identity.

### **2.1.1. Non-convergence**

The main function of non-convergence in language concerns boundaries. CAT research suggests that both non-convergence and divergence accentuate differences between the speaker and his/her addressee (cf. Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991: 27; Giles 2009: 284). In its most clear-cut realisation, a non-converger, all other things being equal, signals that they do not require the listener's approval or respect (Giles 2009: 280), thus establishing a clear boundary between themselves and the listeners. Within certain contexts it can be both intentioned and perceived as hostile, with the intergroup differences emphasised through language use setting the speakers apart. In other cases, non-convergence 'can be endorsed as a positive means of maintaining or even accentuating one's social identity' (ibid: 284). Finally, non-convergence can have even more pronounced positive overtones. Differentiation between psychological and linguistic convergence (cf. Thakerar et al. 1982, Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991: 32-36) allows a variety of incongruent speech events to be accounted for. From this perspective, linguistic non-convergence, can be assumed to have the capacity to render 'individuals' beliefs that they are integrating' (Thakerar et al. 1982: 222) with the interlocutor.

In accordance with the CAT's findings, analysis of the data revealed that non-convergence allows boundaries not only to be constructed, but also contested and renegotiated, creating a range of identity work patterns that facilitate narrative development. In the researched material, 17 instances of linguistic non-convergence were identified, of which 11 represent attempts by one of the speakers to maintain his/her own identity through non-convergence to the interlocutor's speech style, 2 represent an attempt to contest established boundaries, and 4 form part of verbal struggle for dominance between the speakers. In what follows I am going to discuss the three functions of non-convergence identified in cinematic representation of character identity work using the following self-explanatory labels:

- Distancing
- Integrating
- Confrontational

The *distancing* function of non-convergence is the most intuitive, and the one most closely resembling the most common realisation of Giles's non-accommodation. Presupposing

existence of difference between the speakers' speech styles in the beginning of a verbal exchange, non-convergence draws on the social meaning of the marked variety in order to enhance characterisation and emphasise social difference, making it more visible for the viewer as it remains static throughout the length of the exchange. Because of its more static nature, it is often present in interaction between core and minor characters, where minor characters are shown to draw on social stereotypes that require the use of non-standard. In this first encounter between Danila and Kat, non-convergent use of slang by Kat serves precisely such a distancing function:

(Kat) Хай! Ух ты, плеер такой класный, дай послушать... а чё туфту-то такую гоняешь? Нормальное есть что-нибудь? Ты чё, немой?  
(Danila) Нет.  
(Kat) Плеер такой реальный, а одет как обсос... Кислота есть? А башли, башли есть?  
(Danila) Нет.  
(Kat) Ну ладно, я Кэт. Здесь меня всегда найдёшь. Будут деньги, приходи — оттопырится. Ну всё, пока.

(Example 1, B)

As already described in Chapter 4, Kat is characterised through her membership in youth subculture, which can be discerned in her appearance, places of attendance, as well as her speech style. She is a proficient slang user, which can be witnessed in the example above, where nearly every second word she uses can be considered as slang (see underlined items). Representing a lifestyle so far unknown to Danila, Kat is here distanced from him through her distinct and non-converging speech style.

Non-convergence can also be used for temporary distancing between the characters that have been previously shown to have some affinity, as in the case of Sveta's non-convergence to Danila's very understandable cathartic use of swearing (*зад\**) when he discovers that Sveta had been beaten up.

(Danila) Убью гада\*.  
(Sveta) Твои приходили. Тебя спрашивали. А я и вправду не знаю, кто ты и где живешь. Не поверили. Главный у них такой, с круглой мордой. Всё поговорками говорил. Споём?  
(Danila) У меня слуха нет.

(Example 2, B)

As will be shown in later subsection, common use of obscenities for cathartic purposes can emphasise shared experiences. Sveta, however, is shown to avoid swearing. Her calm tone of voice and quick change of topic stand in contrast to Danila's emotional reaction. With Danila being the reason for her beating, Sveta is here portrayed as being at a crossroads with regards to their relationship.

Distancing function of non-convergence can also be employed in the comedy genre to signal that in the given instance attempt at communication is doomed to failure, as in the following sequence:

(Gorokhov) Кузьмич!  
(Ivan Kuzmich) Погоди.  
(Gorokhov) Ты как сюда попал?  
(Ivan Kuzmich) Через задницу\*.  
(Gorokhov) Врёшь, через старухину комнату!  
(Ivan Kuzmich) Очень мне нужно через её комнату шастать.  
(Nikolai) Кузьмич, ты хоть знаешь, куда ты попал? Кузьмич, э?  
(Ivan Kuzmich) Я знаю одно — у меня в этом году впервые клюёт.  
А вы мне мозги засераете. Идите отсюда!  
(Gorokhov) А куда нам идти?  
(Ivan Kuzmich) В задницу\*!

(Example 3, WP)

Ivan Kuzmich, a keen fisherman, has just unknowingly found the window to Paris and has started fishing in the Seine. Overwhelmed by the fact that for the first time that year he is managing to catch fish, he refuses to engage in the conversation, replying with short, rude or obscene statements.<sup>30</sup> By doing this, he is distancing himself from the group of neighbours, who not only possess the knowledge of where they are, but are also seeking help from him. This is taken to the level of absurdity and produces comic effect when he insists on using the obscenity *задница\** in response to questions 'How did you get here?' and 'Where should we go?'

The *integrating* function, although it has yielded too few examples to provide material for thorough analysis, can be suggested to operate when one of the speakers shows a non-convergent use of non-standard when addressing a standard speaker to benefit from the

---

<sup>30</sup> *идти в задницу* – go to hell, the hell with you, Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 73; *засерать мозги* – (lit. to shit on someone's brains) to confuse, drive to distraction, *ibid*: 78.

connotation of familiarity that non-standard is commonly understood to possess, as in the following exchange between Gorokhov and Nikolai, very shortly after Nikolai has moved into the flat:

(Gorokhov) Брось ты эту школу свою на хер\*. Что тебе эти тошнотики? Переведешься на фабрику — нам настройщики во как нужны!

(Example 4, WP)

Happy to find out that Nikolai was a musician, Gorokhov launches into attempts to persuade him to quit teaching at school and join them at the musical instruments factory. Nikolai, shown to be silent throughout Gorokhov's address, in previous exchanges has been predominantly shown using standard language in a courteous and polite manner. Despite that and the fact that the pair has only been acquainted for a few hours, Gorokhov employs slang<sup>31</sup> and obscenities,<sup>32</sup> emphasising the existence of common grounds between him and Nikolai, and inviting the latter to converge.

Finally, the *confrontational* function of non-convergence is activated when the two speakers are deliberately keeping their speech style unaltered despite the growing tension. An example of this can be drawn from SM:

(Mother) Глаза у тебя здоровые, только ты, козел\*, на голову больной с детства.  
(Vassilii) В кругах, к которым я близок, мама, слово «козёл» очень обидное...  
(Mother) Да что вы говорите...  
(Vassilii) Постарайтесь поэтому в разговоре его не употреблять.  
(Mother) А вот интересно, козёл\*, что ты такое свистнул, что у меня по два раза в день обыски. Я вечером паркет поло́жу, утром его уже менты\* отдирают.

(Example 5, SM)

Although the word *козёл*\* (lit. he-goat) in itself cannot be considered obscene, it is nevertheless a derogatory insult, in this function close to the meaning of English 'swine,

<sup>31</sup> *тошнотик* – an annoying, unpleasant person, Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 204.

<sup>32</sup> *бросить на хер* – to hell with it, *ibid*: 230.

bastard, scumbag' (Nikolski & Davie 1997: 49), which renders it unsuitable for formal polite conversation. Identity work foregrounded in this conversation concerns the attempts of the son, Vassilii, to establish his authority by claiming affinity to educated circles, and thus foregrounding his mother's uneducated background and his own 'knowledge power' (which will be discussed further in the following section). His mother's non-convergence, represented by both the repeated use of the word *козёл* and by the other non-standard items,<sup>33</sup> renders her resistance to the authority of standard language preached by Vassilii. Keeping to her non-standard speech style she acknowledges the boundaries thus established, but argues for the redefinition of conventional values, attached to these language varieties, as it is after all Vassilii, the self-styled representative of the educated, who engages in illegal activities, which lead to the frequent searches in her house.

### 2.1.2. Shift from non-standard into standard

This shift is rarely used within peer group conversation due to the ingroup identity marker associated with the use of non-standard, rejecting which can constitute a strong face-threatening act, which tends to be avoided within peer group interaction. There are, however, 5 instances of such shifts found in the material, which can all be linked to some change in the circumstances of interaction. Two functions can be identified:

- Tension reducing
- Tension increasing

In most cases, the shift has been used *to increase the tension* and has been associated with the need to change either subject of speech or personas, as in the example below

(Kuzmich) Семёнов, ну чё? Как там коровка-то моя?  
 (Semenov) Думал, колхозная...  
 (Kuzmich) Ну чё?  
 (Semenov) ...которую украли. А это твоя летала?  
 (Kuzmich) Ну.  
 (Semenov) Ну, Кузьмич, всех дерьмом измажешь!  
 (Kuzmich) Ты что, каким дерьмом?  
 (Semenov) Вы арестованы!  
 (Zhenia) У тебя пистолетик-то есть?  
 (Semenov) Тогда задержаны. Все!

(Example 6, PNH)

---

<sup>33</sup> *свистнуть* – to steal, Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 176; *менты*.

In this verbal exchange Semenov, the local police officer, discovers that the cow that had been illegally transported on the military plane actually belongs to his friend Kuzmich. Torn between the two personas, he first reacts with a statement that renders his personal judgement of Kuzmich's act. The obscene item *дерьмо*<sup>34</sup> here stands as the ingroup marker that emphasises ingroup belonging. The following utterance, however, represents his attempt to change into persona of the police office, rendered through his shift into standard, devoid of any slang / obscene items. The last two utterances are therefore shown to employ strictly formal speech style that draws on the police discourse.

Increase in tension can also be used to create ironic effect, as in the abovementioned Example 5. There, momentary shift into standard, overemphasised by the use of formal *vy-*form, was employed to represent the speaker's doubt about the interlocutor's right to voice criticism. Even more explicit use of this shift for ironic effect can be seen in the following example:

(Artur) Короче, так они разгулялись на свадьбе на этой, что морячок этот в каком-то достаточно левом\* кабаке...запечатал... короче говоря, ломанул такого человека стулом по голове, что лучше бы вообще не знать, что такие люди на земле есть. И порешили большие мужчины их по этому случаю слить. Но по понятиям. Папа был у них такой, норильский. Главный. Так его строго в 24 часа депортировали. Как писателя Солженицына. Чтобы не обустроивал здесь все по своему.

(Unnamed newsmaker) Ну с папой понятно все. А остальные с этим морячком в тюрьму пойдут?

(Artur) Остальные... А остальные члены преступной группировки жалости не достойны. В ближайшее время будут задержаны и предстанут перед суровым лицом закона.

(Unnamed newsmaker) Да.

(Artur) Должен же перед ним хоть кто-нибудь стоять.

(Example 7, DCM)

Here, Artur's shift from rich use of argot in the narration of the events (see underlined items) to standard language that draws on the discourse of legal system is employed to create an ironic effect, casting doubts in the fairness of the legal system thus represented. The ironic effect becomes even clearer when the exchange is placed within the context of preceding

---

<sup>34</sup> excrement, filth, shit, Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 51.

conversation between the interlocutors, who had been discussing montage of a TV news item that would cover arrest of a gang yet to be made and consist of pre-made material.

A shift into standard, as mentioned above, can also work to *reduce the tension*. For example, in the analysed material it has been employed to represent an intention to take the edge off the situation following the cathartic use of obscenities.

(Gorokhov) А лучше всего растереть бы её всю... Давай разотрём её всю!  
(Nikolai) Да как?  
(Gorokhov) Как-как, разденем и разотрём!  
(Vera) Я тебе разотру, я тебе так разотру, кобелино, что ты у меня там вот висеть будешь!  
(Gorokhov) Да я же не в том смысле...  
(Vera) Ну-ка... Она же больная вся... Бедненькая... Она ж голодная! Пошли к нам?  
(Gorokhov) Давай пойдём, у нас закуска, выпивка, чего мы тут...  
(Vera) Пошли-пошли...

(Example 8, WP)

This scene shows Gorokhov and Nikolai in Nicole's studio. Having realised that Nicole had fallen ill and developed a fever, Gorokhov suggests undressing and massaging her all over. This is overheard by his wife and provokes an outburst from her side, employing the obscene *кобелино*.<sup>35</sup> The shift of her attention to Nicole is rendered through a change in speech style. In this exchange Vera shows her awareness that taking in-family quarrels out on public, even within another peer group of neighbours, can be face-threatening, thus the change of topic is quick to come. Turning her attention to Nicole, in way of a face-saving technique, Vera changes not only the type of lexis, but also the tone of voice and manner, all of which contribute to projecting a different persona from the one that appeared in the utterance directed at her husband: this time, persona of a kind and caring neighbour.

### 2.1.3. Common use of non-standard

Verbal exchanges that show predominant use of non-standard by two or more of the speakers without any significant lexical shifts are numerous present in the material, and in the largest number of instances meanings thus produced relate to the establishment and

---

<sup>35</sup> a highly sexed or oversexed man (lit. a he-dog), Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 93.

confirmation of common grounds between the speakers. This association of common use of non-standard with ingroup belonging can, however, serve within the film narrative a variety of functions, which can be divided into those with a positive and negative charge.

Although *positive charge* of commonality established by the use of the same linguistic variety is more intuitive, it is, somewhat surprisingly, not overwhelmingly prevalent, accounting for just 17 out of 28 examples. The main functions of the positively charged uses of non-standard are to emphasise the interlocutors' belonging to the same group (friends, co-workers), as well as underline the value attributed to the common background, age group, worldview. This association can also be intentionally exploited by one of the speakers for local purposes, as in the following example:

(Misha) Артур. Что за моржовые? Говорят, стриптиз какой-то снимать.  
(Artur) Мишаня, это не моржовые, это родные.  
(Misha) Ручные что-ли!  
(Artur) Я же говорю, родные.  
(Misha) А почему не по форме одеты? Здесь такие не живут.  
(Artur) Мишань, такие везде живут. Миш, это наши друзья.

(Example 9, DCM)

In this verbal exchange Artur's ability to show command of the same type of lexis as that of his socially awkward colleague enables him to calm down the latter. By talking Misha's language, Artur affirms his right to parity and, with it, authority to advise who is *родной* and who is *моржовый*. It needs to be noted, that meanings of these lexical items (and many other non-standard ones in this film) are largely unknown to an average viewer (cf. Liubarskaia 2005). Moreover, their lexical categories can only be determined in broad terms, based on the rendered ingroup/outgroup qualities. Assumed here to belong to the criminal argot, the word *родной* (lit. native) infers the ingroup belonging of the referent, while *моржовый* (lit. of a walrus) within the context of the exchange above is used for the opposite end, that is, to point to the outgroup membership. Additionally, the use of *моржовый* evokes the obscene expression *хуй моржовый*, which renders a negative evaluation of a person; cf. an idiot (Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 300). What matters, though, is the marked non-standardness of these items, which constructs the common ground between the two interlocutors who employ them in their conversation.

Shared experiences can also be represented through common use of non-standard, especially through the use of obscenities in their cathartic function:

(Mikhalych) Ну вы, блин, даете! Что это было?  
(Lev) Это всё медведь, гад\*! Если б ты не рычал, когда в баню лез... мы ж думали, нам конец...  
(Mikhalych) Где эта сволоочь\*?  
(Lev) Где эта сволоочь\*?  
(Kuzmich) Где...?

(Example 10, PNH)

This verbal exchange happens directly after the army general, referred to in the film as Mikhalych, comes to himself after he's been scalded by a bucket of hot water, having been mistaken for the bear. The preceding scene, showing five naked men in a banya trying to find a way to escape the bear that had entered the adjacent room, was filled with tension and panic. Having by this point ensured that the bear had disappeared and Mikhalych was feeling fine, the group of friends is represented as coming to terms with their adventure. Repetition of the question employing an obscenity *сволоочь*\* by several of the friends emphasises shared experience and need for release of tension, (re-)constructing common ground that was compromised by the preceding events.

Repetition of non-standard items by several speakers can also serve as means of reconciliation, as in the example below:

(Gorokhov) Ты знаешь, какой он рыбак? Угрей ловит в канале Грибоедова!  
(Ivan Kuzmich) Щас принесу, маринованных.  
(Gorokhov) Не надо!  
(Ivan Kuzmich) Почему?  
(Gorokhov) Потому что они у тебя ГОВНОМ\* воняют!  
(Ivan Kuzmich) А что ж ты хочешь, если они всю жизнь в ГОВНЕ\* живут?  
(Unnamed young neighbour) Ладно, дед, все мы в ГОВНЕ\* живем, так что давай, тащи своих угрей.

(Example 11, WP)

The first use of the obscene word *говно*\* in this exchange constituted a face-threatening act to the positive face of Ivan Kuzmich, casting doubt in his fishing abilities. Contextualised as part of a peer-group discussion, Gorokhov's decision to openly state his opinion indicates his belief that their ingroup belonging would minimise the consequences of this act. Ivan

Kuzmich's defensive position, though, made it clear that the offense was taken, determining the need for redressive action, which was performed by the younger neighbour. What insured the success of this redressive action was, in part at least, the fact that the last utterances repeated the offending word, thus diminishing its obscene shock value, and creating conditions for reconciliation of the neighbours.

However, similarities in speech style, used to convey interlocutors' shared background, in the presence of another character can become a tool of segregation rather than unity, as in the example below.

(Zubek) За братву. Прямую, которая по-мужски стоит. Реально. За твоих. За моих. За всяких. Капитан... капитан... Так ты ж подшитый, вроде? Иголки, говорил?

(Prosecutor) Эх, хорошо! Эх, хорошо! Вот ты по жизни-то такой спокойный, я гляжу, а что ж ты морячка не повязал, не придержал? Тебе начальство приказало, а ты приказ не исполнил, а кашу-то какую заварил.

(Major) Так от того и не повязал, что спокойный.

(Prosecutor) Ааа, вижу. Спокойный... Спокойный... морячок исчез, Артур этот вообще куда-то пропал. Я тебе говорил, не надо было на него ставить. И этот как бы вроде ни при чем. Ни при чем. И все спокойные. Все ни в чем не виноваты.

(Zubek) Послушай, кто держит себя – знает, кому ответ держать.

(Prosecutor) Ты мне ещё Ницше начни цитировать... Логика у тебя, гражданин Зубек... готов доказать!.. фашистская!

(Zubek) Чего? [...]

(Major) Тихо, Коль, тихо-тихо.. хватит-хватит... погоди-погоди...

(Zubek) А чего он? Чего он?

(Major) Ты хоть с катушек-то не слезай.

(Zubek) Сам фашист!

(Major) Ну хватит, милый, базаров ученых. Мы тебя тут не проповедовать звали. Пургой будешь корифанов своих прокурорских заметать.

(Prosecutor) Это для тебя пурга. А это очень серьезно. Так что... понял?! Ло-ги-ка!

(Example 12, DCM)

This verbal exchange is between two brothers in arms, Zubek and the police major Alexei, on the one hand, and the Prosecutor, on the other. Having established a common army background in the previous scene, the former two are shown to be on friendly, brotherly terms, often employing argot and obscenities in their speech. The Prosecutor, on the other hand, was up to now depicted antagonistically, refusing to drink vodka with the others, discussing work-related matters, and using standard language throughout. Here, he is having his first drink, which is followed by a verbal attack on Zubek. In their response to the

Prosecutor's accusations, both Zubek and Major employ argot (*держатъ себя, базар\**, *пургой замечать, корефан*) which creates a linguistic contrast with the Prosecutor's predominantly standard speech, and emphasises their ingroup association. Prosecutor is thus alienated and positioned as an outgroup member. This example shows that ingroup belonging, indicated by common use of the same language variety, can be employed to represent not only positive, but also negative dynamics of interpersonal relations.

The specificity of the *negative charge* of mutual use of non-standard lies in the fact that verbal aggression in this case is also constructed upon the understanding of ingroup belonging.

For example, the following exchange emphasises the family ties between the two speakers, despite having a rather pronounced negative charge:

(Father) Кто?  
(Zinka) Зинка я, открывай.  
(Father) Какая такая Зинка? Уходи отсюда, шаллава!  
(Zinka) Ты чё, старый, охерел\* там? Открывай давай, Зинка я, говорю. Вот дурак, мозги сгнили все. Ну! [the door opens]  
(Father) Чего у тебя?  
(Zinka) Жильца тебе привела.  
(Father) Чего ходят...  
(Zinka) Ну чего, старый, запаршивел тут без меня?

(Example 13, B)

Both Zinka and her father employ in their speech a wide range of derogatory items (underlined), including obscenities (*охерел\**). These items are potentially face-threatening, however, in this instance they are employed within the frame of family relations. As observed by Blum-Kulka, family interaction 'is located at the outermost informal end of the [formality] continuum, due to its backstage setting and the level of intimacy among the participants' (1990: 264-5), enabling family members to be more direct in their discourse. Blum-Kulka also notes that apart from informality family politeness also hinges on the aspects of power and affect. In the example above, common use of non-standard in the speech of both family members represents all three aspects, with informality determining non-offensiveness of rude and even obscene items, while power struggle is most apparent in the initial cross-fire that precedes the door being opened by the father, and affect mitigating potentially offensive speech style that Zinka adopts in address to her father.

Peer-group nature of interaction determines that mutual use of non-standard by interlocutors can also be used to represent covert power-struggle within the group.

(Teenager 1, male) Куда намыливаешься?

(Teenager 2, male) Шагай.

(Irka) Отвянь!

(Teenager 1, male) Видала, деловая.

(Teenager 2, male) Точно.

(Example 14, I)

In this exchange, the two adolescent boys are trying to affirm their position of dominance in interaction with a more independent teenage girl Irka. To achieve this, they, first, choose to employ slang (*намыливаться*), which renders ingroup familiarity, as well as parity of their and Irka's positions. Moreover, they attempt to lexicalise their dominant position by asking her where she was going. This question, in itself, could be considered face-threatening if used outside peer-group relations, so establishing common ground by using slang is a necessary prerequisite for the teenage boys to be allowed to make this question. Irka, however, does not allow them to affirm their dominant position by giving an instant rebuff. Her use of slang marks ingroup familiarity, as well as rejection of subordinate position. Although this sequence of utterances is made in passing, it represents the dynamics of identity work within the adolescent community represented in the film. Despite ingroup membership of all orphans in this community, they are also subjected to a rather strict hierarchy. At the top of it stands the indisputable leader Kolian, and the boys are often shown to be discussing community matters with him, whereas the girls are shown to be doing as they are told. Irka's rejection of such a subordinate position, made in passing here, will later have important implications for the development of the plot-line, when she steals the money box from Kolian and helps Vania to run away from the orphanage to search for his mother.

The sense of familiarity can also add the meaning of disrespect to the exchange. Just as in the previous examples, the following exchange represents verbal conflict between the speakers:

(Uncle) Куда мы так вваливаем? Меня мутит уже.

(Makar) Вваливаем работать, дядя. Человека валить. За него

бабок ломанем много, купишь себе лекарства особого,

раскумаришься, и ломать тебя перестанет.

*(continued on the next page)*

(Uncle) Да ты очнись, ишак, у нас дом 89, а ты куда прёшь-то!  
 Давай-ка рули в этот, в рукав! [...] Дверью хлопать не надо...  
 (Makar) Старый, ты [достал? unclear] реально, хватит мне радио  
 твоего.  
 (Uncle) Мы ж не знаем, куда окна выходят, урод.  
 (Makar) Ну заканчивай, дядя, устал я что-то от тебя.  
 (Uncle) Не надо, без лифта. Четвертый этаж — так поднимемся.  
 Если он нас заметил, пусть нервы себе потрет, а не заметил —  
 шуметь не будем.  
 (Makar) Как вы все учить любите, а главное на вас же видно,  
 старый. Что тебя кумарит\* просто, ё-моё. Личина у тебя играет.  
 А придумал-то целую науку. Лифт не хлопай, дверь не вызывай.  
Лечишь, лечишь меня, как наставник в путяге.

(Example 15, DCM)

Although this exchange happens between the two family members, as in ex. 13, the interaction between Makar and his uncle is constructed first and foremost around matters pertaining to their current murder assignment. This results in their power struggle not being mitigated by affect, as what is at stake is their roles within the team. Hence, the mutual use of non-standard, including argot,<sup>36</sup> by the interlocutors establishes the common ground of work relations. Despite the generation gap, there are no discernible attempts by Makar to signal respect to an older family member. This indicates claims to complete parity and creates conditions for conflict, as it compromises Uncle's position of experience and in-depth trade knowledge. The identity work in this exchange is exercised through consistent use of non-standard (see underlined items). Employing the combination of argot, youth and drug slang varieties enables the two to lay claims to their respective trade skills, and deviations from this speech style would compromise their standing.

#### 2.1.4. Shift from standard into non-standard

The most numerous group of examples within the dataset relates to the shifts from standard into non-standard. 49 units were analysed across all six films, with 54 instances of intrapersonal shift having been identified. It was revealed that the functions that can be attributed to the use of such shifts are manifold, but can be grouped together into five major function types, based on identification of the dominant aspect of non-standard lexis that is

---

<sup>36</sup> e.g. *валить* – to kill, Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 32, *нервы тереть* (cf. *тереть* - to do something intensely, Elistratov 2007: 405).

being drawn on for the purpose of identity construction in each of the analysed verbal exchanges. These function types are:

- Emotive
- Emphatic
- Referential
- Inclusive, and
- Attributive.

The two most common functions are *emotive* and *emphatic* with 18 and 19 identified instances respectively.

*Emotive* function is performed by speech style shifts into slang, argot or obscenities that serve to represent strong emotional charge of the character's speech and/or their attitude towards the subject. Although obscenities are the most common type of lexis used to fulfil this function (cf. the cathartic function of obscenities), it can also be related to shifts into argot or slang, as follows from the example below.

(Lev) Что ж МЕНТ\* сапоги не взял?  
(Kuzmich) Какие сапоги?  
(Lev) Ну он же сапоги искал.  
(Kuzmich) Семёнов...пистолет искал. Пистолет он потерял.  
(Lev) Аааа...

(Example 16, PNH)

In this verbal exchange Lev is asking his friend Kuzmich about their local police officer Semenov. Lev's speech style, as seen across the full length of the film, is predominantly standard, with occasional shifts into non-standard, linked to exceptional circumstances (cf. ex. 10, p. 146 and ex. 12, p. 193). In this instance, Lev is shown to draw on the argot term *мент*\*, which, despite its wide usage in the contemporary society, retains derogatory associations that stem from its origins in the insular argot of the criminal underworld. Since Lev is a crime detective, and hence part of the police force himself, his condescending tone of voice and negative evaluation, inherent in the employed lexical item, can be related to his higher position in the police hierarchy. The subject of this verbal exchange, item(s) lost by Semenov, gives further grounds for his sceptical attitude towards the lower ranks of police. The choice of an argot item as reference thus serves the emotive function and reveals Lev's negative attitude to Semenov.

More frequently, and as mentioned above more predictably, the emotive function is realised through cathartic use of obscenities, as in the example below, which presents Gorokhov's reaction to the appearance of his wife:

(Nicole, in French) Посмотрите на свою работу. А эта группа, как мне их соединить? Это же была композиция!  
(Gorokhov) Ух ты, смотри, намекает. Девка-то горячая какая.  
(Nikolai) Ну да, отвратительно.  
(Gorokhov) Зато в постели они, говорят, шустрые.  
(Nicole, in French) А диван? Посмотрите, какие пятна. Что мне теперь с ними делать? А этот омар, у которого вы сломали клешню?  
(Gorokhov) Вот как хочет – раком, раком... на диване!  
(Nicole, in French) Остается все это только выбросить.  
(Vera) Горохов!  
(Gorokhov) У, твою мать... Верка дверь нашла. Всё, я линияю.

(Example 17, WP)

Having been the first to discover the window to Paris, Nikolai and Gorokhov have by the beginning of this scene ended up in the studio of a young French female artist. Nicole is here shown berating them for the mess they had created when falling through her window. With the language barrier precluding clear understanding of her words, Gorokhov is attempting to infer the meaning from her gestures. Once his name is called out by his wife, he realises that his presence in these surroundings might be misunderstood and reacts with an obscene exclamation *твою мать*.<sup>37</sup> Used cathartically, it holds strong emotional charge, and renders not only Gorokhov's reaction to a specific situation, but also reveals the family dynamics in the Gorokhov family, as will be discussed further in section 3.

The *emphatic* function serves the purpose of emphasising some part / increasing the overall effect of a statement. It is most commonly realised through obscene items; however, as is the case with the emotive function, it can also be represented through use of slang and argot.

(Artur) Проследуем же в логово преступной группировки и осуществим захват её членов. Подчеркиваю, главарей!  
(Major) Да хоть матерей.  
(Artur) Пешочком-пешочком, майор!

(continued on the next page)

---

<sup>37</sup> Fuck it! Damn it! Cf. Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 60

(Major) Послушай, если ты там хорошо так все знаешь, так иди ты первым заходи.  
 (Artur) А кто-то из нас опытом в оперативной работе хвалился?  
 (Prosecutor) Товарищи, постойте, ну погодите, вам говорю. Стойте! Если тут, возможно, начнутся какие-нибудь эксцессы, то давайте договоримся, как мы будем вести себя, если.... ну...  
 (Major) Остывать мы будем, если...  
 (Artur) Короче, все. Я смотрю, решительность и бесстрашие не в почете в правоохранительных органах. Хорошо, мужчины, пусть эти лоси норильские меня тогда грохают.

(Example 18, DCM)

This verbal exchange takes place when the three men set off to detain a gang, according to an agreement between mafia bosses and police services. Argot term *остывать* (lit. to cool down) is employed by the Major to emphasise the imminent death in case of a sudden change of attitudes among the mafia. Having worded his critique of the bravery he could see among the law enforcement officers, Artur also shifts into argot,<sup>38</sup> emphasising his contempt for the considerations of safety worded by the Prosecutor. The Major and Artur's use of argot within this verbal exchange is also significant because of the contrast it creates with the standard speech of the Prosecutor, already at this early point in the film distancing the Prosecutor from the other characters. This verbal exchange, and the response of the Major in particular, will be further discussed in section 3 with regards to the performance of masculinity, which plays an important role in the identity work represented in this exchange.

Already in this example it is possible to discern the recurrent thread passing through the instances of emphatic use of the shift. It is the function of non-standard to emphasise and frame the telling of 'truth'. Wierzbicka, in her extensive study of Russian cultural scripts concerning 'truth', observes that 'from Anglo point of view, the insistence on telling the truth, characteristic of Russian discourse, may often seem extreme, not to say excessive' (2002: 421). She follows on to draw attention to the Russian expressions that foreground the painful effect that truth-telling may have on the listener, as in *резать правду в глаза* (lit. to cut the truth into somebody's eyes). Such importance attributed to the truth determines the need for it to be told notwithstanding potentially detrimental consequences for the speaker's face. Bowing to the idea that even the hardest truth needs to be told, many of the characters

---

<sup>38</sup> *грохнуть* – to kill, Aleksandrov 2001: 89, *лоси*.

are shown to present it through the medium of non-standard, thus emphasising and ‘toughening’ the statement.

A further example of this has already appeared in this section in ex. 11. Discussed in terms of reconciliation provided by triple repetition of the obscenity, it can be brought in again here with regards to the first instance of obscene use. Gorokhov’s decision to reject Ivan Kuzmich’s offer of marinated eels and then provide an honest and forthright reason has transcended even the extensive limits of familiarity typical of ingroup relations, as proven by the offence taken by Ivan Kuzmich. It can be assumed, then, that the value of truth-telling in this instance has outweighed face-saving considerations, which has been underscored by the emphatic use of an obscenity.

Criticism thus voiced is not only characteristic of one of the aspects of this function, at times it constitutes the main reason for the emphatic shift into non-standard. Its effect increases when it represents a significant deviation from the established speech style of an educated and sophisticated character as in this example of the wife of the US ambassador:

(Vassilii) Ну неудобно же. Ну чего ты, в натуре... Чего люди-то скажут?  
(Carol) Люди? Люди будут радоваться. Йес? Радоваться! Люди, гуд бай! Люди, мы уходить заниматься секс. Мы ненадолго — мы возвращаться. Люди, веселитесь!  
(Jennifer) Слаба на передок...

(Example 19, SM)

In this sequence, Jennifer is not part of the actual conversation, but as it is made forcefully public by Carol’s address and loud tone of voice, acts as an overhearer. Her obscene comment<sup>39</sup> is then a statement of criticism, which is based on inappropriateness of Carol’s public behaviour. Although Jennifer had been previously introduced as ‘taking interest in Russian folklore’ and had been shown to pen down curious phrases, as well as in one instance use them for cathartic purposes (during an attempt of the Russian police to detain her and her husband), in this case the formal circumstances of the speech event and Carol’s otherwise sophisticated manners create viewer expectations of her adherence to formal

---

<sup>39</sup> *слаба на передок* – (lit. weak in the pussy) promiscuous, sexually available (of a woman), Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 244.

speech style. When these expectations are defied with an obscene expression, the criticism worded by Carol is further emphasised through the obscene form of expression. Also, as Carol is Jennifer's compatriot, criticism is here combined with distancing. Disapproving of her compatriot's manners, Jennifer constructs ingroup affiliation with the Russians present at the wedding through emphatic use of a Russian obscenity. The emphatic use of non-standard, in this case, thus represents identity work on several levels: it states criticism, which is presented as 'hard truth' rather than a personal opinion; the emphasis derived from deviation from the usual speech style constructs this event as 'extraordinary' and 'beyond the limits', which in its turn provides an excuse for obscene use within formal context, and finally this instance is used to negotiate affiliation with one group while distancing from another.

The *referential* function of language, according to Jakobson, is characterised by its orientation towards the context (1960; reprinted in Coupland & Jaworski 1999: 55). Although in the case of shift into non-standard language it is not necessarily 'the leading task of numerous messages' (ibid), with emotive and emphatic qualities revealed to have been drawn on more frequently within the analysed material, it has nevertheless been identified as the dominant function in 7 verbal exchanges. Adapting the concept to the current study, I suggest that the *referential* function of slang and argot items used in cinematic discourse is to point to specific phenomena within the social world. Although simultaneously signalling the speaker's belonging to the corresponding social group through the indexical value of such lexis, my analysis has identified a number of instances where the referential function dominates, as in the example below:

(Child 1) А за что его?

(Anton) А, скрысятничал.

(Child 2) Да Колян за это и убить может.

(Example 20, I)

Here, Anton and the other two orphan children are shown sitting by the window of their room, discussing the beating that is happening in the yard. Ingroup belonging of the three interlocutors is here signalled through their appearance (similar clothes, visually same age), location (the room that had by then been established as the bedroom of Anton and Vania's age group), and their symbolic framing on the same side of the window, as opposed to the group of adolescents who are taking part in the beating. The use of slang by Anton is hence unmarked, and the focus falls on the contents of his utterance rather than its form. The

primary function of his use of the word *скрысятничал* is to refer to the act of stealing from one's own group.<sup>40</sup> This is an economical and, therefore, preferable way of referring to a familiar phenomenon within peer-group interaction.

Criminal argot, as a type of a trade jargon, can in a similar way provide the speakers with lexical tools that may be used for referential purposes. What differentiates argot from slang is its originally stronger cryptolectal nature, which results in the argot user being instantly incriminated with possession of the criminal ingroup knowledge. This added value can be employed for construction of character identities in a variety of ways, often to complicate the first impression given by speakers with no apparent links to the criminal world:

(Marina) Нет, ну ты прикинь, Артур. Ну, пошла я в аптеку, познакомилась там с одним мужчиной, ну, в соседнем доме живет. А он, представляешь, космонавт.  
(Artur) Да ладно!  
(Marina) Герой Советского Союза. Ну, такой потрепанный, уже давно не летает. Скафандр у него дома есть.  
(Artur) Да ты что... А Гриша чего?  
(Marina) Ну а что Гриша? Выследил меня. Всё, говорит. Карточки кредитные порвал. Ножницами порезал. Подослал каких-то мальчиков. Выходим из подъезда с моим космонавтом, два БМВ чёрных стоят, люди явно тревожные. Ну я-то их знаю, они от крыши у того. Космонавт и говорит: «Вроде, делегация какая-то». Думал, его Родина опять в полёт призывает! Ну, я-то знаю, что там за полёт...  
(Artur) Ха-ха...

(Example 21, DCM)

This scene presents Marina to the viewer for the first time. The audience's first impression is thus derived from this short dialogue with Artur, where Marina is telling of her recent acquaintance with a cosmonaut. Trivial in itself, the story is complicated by Artur's hint at the existence of another male figure, Grisha, who stands in opposition to the naïve and weathered cosmonaut. Grisha's affiliation becomes apparent from Marina's following account, which employs argot terms. Used in their referential function, these items provide an economical way of referring to the attributes of the criminal world.<sup>41</sup> In this case, though,

---

<sup>40</sup> cf. *крысятничать* – to steal from fellow soldiers in the barracks (lit. to rat), Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 133.

<sup>41</sup> cf. *крыша* – lit. roof – Engl. front, cover, Nikolski & Davie 1997: 55.

more than in the previous example where slang was used, they instantly signal the speaker's ingroup knowledge. The effect created by such use of argot is further enhanced by the direct reference provided in Marina's last utterance (*Ну, я-то знаю [...]*), constructing Marina's character as knowledgeable about the criminal world, despite not being overtly affiliated with it.

The referential use of argot can also be incorporated into criticism of those phenomena that are being referred to, thus putting these uses at the borderline of referential and emotive functions, as can be exemplified by the following example:

(Rinat) Уезжаю я, Ксюша.  
(Ksiusha) Куда?  
(Rinat) Домой поеду. В горы к брату. Брат у меня старший, Канат.  
В горах отары гоняет. Ну, не объяснить мне тебе. Чужое мне  
здесь всё. Не моё. Братва эта, понятия. Мне по жизни ничего  
здесь не надо, кроме тебя.

(Example 22, DCM)

In this verbal exchange Rinat breaks the news to Ksiusha that he is planning to escape life as a criminal and move back to the Caucasus. Here, the words *братва*,<sup>42</sup> *понятия*<sup>43</sup> serve simultaneously as denotative referents of corresponding phenomena, and as symbols of outlawry in general that Rinat had come to loathe and now wants to distance himself from. Although the emotive aspect of argot use is here clearly strong, what differentiates it from straightforward cases of emotive function is Rinat's actual belonging to the criminal world. He is not shown employing an alien discourse in order to render emotions, but reinterprets what used to be his own ingroup language. The referential function can hence be considered dominant, albeit mitigated by emotive undertones.

The *inclusive* function, referring to the use of shifts into non-standard to emphasise affinity with the other speaker, is the one that draws most productively on the associations of non-standard use with familiarity and ingroup membership. It yields, however, not very many examples: just 7. In its clearest realisation it is synonymous with convergence, as described by Giles in the following statement: 'Convergence happens when interactants'

---

<sup>42</sup> collect. gangsters, hoods – cf. Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 25.

<sup>43</sup> the system of informal norms and laws that operate in the criminal world, Aleksandrov 2002: 115.

communication styles become more similar to another, perhaps in terms of choice of slang, obscenities, grammatical structures, volume, pitch, hand movements, and so on' (2009: 279). Within film dialogues it is represented through a change in a character's speech style that brings it in line with another character, thus aligning the first character with the identity or declared values of the latter. This can be seen in the following example:

(Danila) Кэт? Привет, это Данила. Ну, помнишь, с плеером? Ты мне ещё на концерте телефон дала. Сказала, бабки\* будут — оттопырится. Да, есть!

(Example 23, B)

This is part of Danila's telephone conversation with Kat, of which the viewers only hear Danila's lines. Kat's input remains unknown, but her speech style had been established in the preceding scenes as full of slang (see ex. 1), so Danila's sudden shift into slang in this instance is perceived as convergent. On the micro-level of this scene, Danila's use of slang represents his last resort in trying to remind Kat of himself. Having mentioned to no avail, first, his name, then the gadget that had caught Kat's eye during their first encounter, as well as the fact that she had given him her phone number, Danila finally employs her language, seeking recognition and approval of his ingroup membership. This shift is also very important for the narrative development of the film, as it marks Danila's first attempt to engage with the youth subculture. Previously represented through standard, Danila's speech is here altered, aligning him with Kat and her lifestyle, which constitutes one of the several paths Danila tries out in search of his own identity in the course of the film.

Inclusive function is, however, understood in this study as being broader than convergence. While convergence implies reaction to the other speaker's style, even when it is 'not so much towards people's actual communicative styles in any physical or objective sense', but towards what the speakers *believe* them to be using (Giles 2009: 283), inclusive function represents speakers' wider use of associations of slang, argot and obscenities with familiar, ingroup communication. Such understanding can also explain the use of a shift into non-standard to signal the change into private persona, as in the following exchange:

(Prosecutor) Неплохо нас тут встречают. Живут же люди. Один я, как хрен\* на блюде.  
(Artur) Чё, в завязке что ли?  
(Prosecutor) А? Да, самый щас паскудный срок — третья неделя пошла. Хожу, ничего не соображаю, всё время бухнуть хочется, а нельзя во время лечения. Всё насмарку пойдет.  
(Artur) Зато в тюрьму не садишься.

(Example 24, DCM)

Here, the Prosecutor, who had been previously depicted in his professional capacity, which he performed linguistically by employing stock phrases characteristic of the legal discourse (cf. ex. 18 p. 153), is shown changing into his private persona. Although the conversation is happening in the flat belonging to the gang they are about to detain, the potential threat of gangsters' resistance had by this point dissipated, allowing for more informal topics to be brought up among the peer group of law-enforcement officers. The table laid out with vodka and nibbles triggers off the Prosecutor's revelation of being on remission from alcohol dependence. Change to this delicate topic is linguistically realised through Prosecutor's shift into non-standard (*хрен\* на блюде, бухнуть*,<sup>44</sup> *паскудный*),<sup>45</sup> with its use, uncharacteristic for him, signalling his openness to discussion. Drawing on the connotation of familiarity, this shift is not determined by the interlocutor's speech style, and therefore cannot be called convergent as such, but is inclusive in that its primary orientation is towards establishing conditions of intimate, familiar interaction with the other speaker.

Inclusive function predetermines agentive behaviour of the speaker in all instances, as it represents a conscious attempt at constructing friendly, familiar interaction. At times, such linguistic manipulation can become especially pronounced, especially when friendship terms are sought after preceding disagreement.

(Innokentii) Ваша китчевая музыка испохабила всю русскую культуру. Какую мелодию ни возьми, отовсюду «цыганочка» прет.  
(Roman) Не цыганочка, а ваши 7:40. Еврейская культура, которую вы уже давно выдаете за великую русскую и за великую цыганскую. Правильно я говорю, братишка?  
*(continued on the next page)*

---

<sup>44</sup> to drink, Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 20.

<sup>45</sup> foul, lousy. Cf. *наскуда* – a scoundrel, bastard; prostitute, Shlyakhov & Adler 2006:195.

(Vassilii) Абсолютно точно. Всё жи́ды захватили! Все газеты, все телевизоры и влияют на гоев.  
 (Innokentii) Только вот не надо. Что вы за нация такая, если вас так легко захватить можно. Работать надо, а не водку целыми днями глушить.  
 (Roman) Русофоб!  
 (Vassilii) Ну зачем так грубо-то? Просто жид пархатый.  
 (Innokentii) Антисемит!  
 (Vassilii) Сионист!  
 (Innokentii) Юдофоб. Конокрад.  
 [...]  
 (Innokentii) Испортил песню, дурак.  
 (Vassilii) Ты смотри — во отмороженный. Ну хреновины, конечно, все эти национальности... От человека всё зависит.

(Example 25, SM)

This verbal exchange is between the three brothers. The first part represents an inter-ethnic conflict, which is realised through a series of ethnic slurs. The tension is further augmented through deliberate formality of their speech, with even the insults kept at a formal, and in a way sophisticated, level. The brothers are later reconciled through singing, which is interrupted by the Ambassador's security officer, a Black man, thus providing an opportunity to switch focus from the differences between Russians, Jews and Gypsies to the contrast between the white and the black people, which then enables Vassilii to make a suggestion that it is the personality that counts, not nationality. This effort to ease the tension and ensure success of reconciliation is further strengthened by the use of slang expressions in his last utterance. The shift from the earlier *сионист*<sup>46</sup> to the slang item *хреновины*<sup>47</sup> manipulates connotations inherent in lexical varieties, pointing to the change of mood and constructing grounds for return to the familiar interaction.

Finally, the dataset provided 3 examples of another use of the shift into non-standard, somewhat related to the previous example. The *attributive* function also draws on the

---

<sup>46</sup> Zionist. In the Russian language derogatory meaning is derived from the anti-Semitic propaganda of the Soviet times, cf. definition of *sionizm* from the Big Soviet Encyclopaedia: 'Main content of contemporary Zionism is constituted by its militant chauvinism, racism, anticommunism and anti-sovietism' (1969-1978: online). In this context, derogatory nature of this ethnic insult is further complicated by political underpinnings, and thus implicates user in some knowledge of the complex dynamics of Russian – Jewish relations.

<sup>47</sup> nonsense, Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 298.

conventional associations of the chosen language variety, borrowing lexis from the ‘other’s’ discourse in order to attribute corresponding characteristics to the statement.

(Roman) А этот вообще ненависти своей к нам не скрывает. Проводит пропаганду антицыганскую среди американского населения...

(Innokentii) А за что вас любить-то? Что вы вообще за нация такая? Где ваши корни?

(Roman) Ну конечно! Только вы — богоизбранный народ. Остальные все — недочеловеки. Гои.

(Vassilii) Кстати, насчет гоев. Это вы, евреи, действительно, загнули. Сами-то что, лучше?

(Roman) Ну что ты, братишка, они не лучшие - они единственные, а остальные должны им прислуживать. Но один прокол у них вышел. Христа распяли.

(Innokentii) Сами породили - сами и распяли. Это наши сугубо-еврейские разборки. Гоям не понять.

(Example 26, SM)

This verbal exchange closely precedes ex. 25 and is part of the same heated argument between the brothers regarding their ethnic origins. The sophisticated orchestra conductor Innokentii is here represented giving rebuke regarding Jews’ crucifixion of Jesus. Through the use of an argot term *разборки*<sup>48</sup> he is drawing on the mafia connotations of this word, thus attributing his position the air of ingroup exclusivity and unrestricted power. Within the context of the comedy genre, it also creates the comic effect through an unlikely parallel between religion and mafia.

This function can also be compared to the referential function in that at times it refers to specific phenomena of the surrounding world through the use of economic and precise terminology. This, to an extent, is even true of the use of the word *разборки* above. In this case, within the limits of one word, complex meanings were encoded, which enabled the speaker to draw on social indexicality while at the same time rendering the high level of hostility between the two groups involved in the conflict, which is described by this ‘borrowed’ word. The ‘borrowed’ nature of discourse, which lies outside the usual speech style of the character and is only employed temporarily for specific purposes, is thus the

---

<sup>48</sup> settlement of a dispute between criminal groups, Aleksandrov 2001: 118.

distinguishing trait of the attributive function. In the following verbal exchange such temporal, borrowed nature comes to fore through metalinguistic discussion:

(Lena) Главное, чтобы это убедительно звучало. Чтоб коротко и ясно, без всяких слов. Чтоб никаких сомнений не возникало. Деньги давай! Нет, плохо... Быстро деньги давай! Нет... тоже как-то... Оооо, вот как я скажу. На счет три - стреляю! Нужны деньги — быстро, мужик!  
(Katia) А если это баба окажется? Ну, женщина?  
(Lena) А если это баба будет, я ей скажу: «Нужны деньги, сука\*».  
(Katia) А... почему «сука\*»?  
(Lena) Ты слушай... тебе деньги не нужны? Тебе, конечно, легко говорить...  
(Katia) Я не хотела тебя обидеть, извини. Я ведь слушаю, очень внимательно.  
(Lena) Нет, самое главное, всё резко и уверенно, чтоб было понятно, что мы не в первый раз. Парадняк найдем достойный, укроемся там. Клиент туда войдет, я свет сразу потушу, и со спины на него наеду. Он от внезапности притормозится, ты ему лицо закрывай, бабки\* бери и уходи дверь открывать.

(Example 27, DCM)

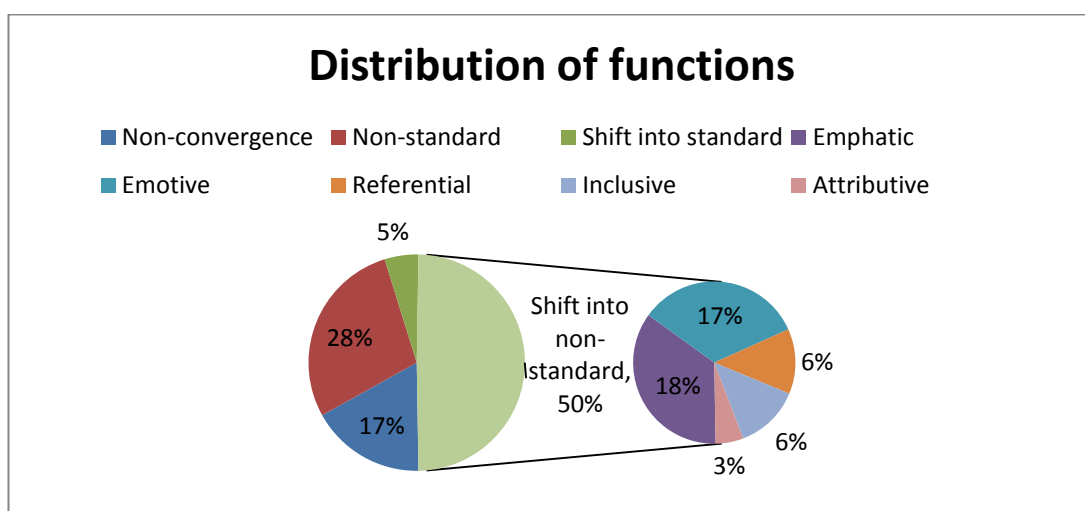
The two teenage girls are here shown plotting an armed robbery. Two lexical varieties are being drawn on – obscenities and argot. In the first half of this verbal exchange Lena is trying to come up with a line that would sound authoritative and threatening. In case of a female victim, she suggests to shout ‘We need your money, bitch’. When asked by Katia why they would call the woman ‘bitch’ (*сука\**), Lena gets upset. The word, chosen because of its obscene power of derogation, is hence constructed as belonging to an alien discourse, and in this instance only borrowed for specific local needs. In the second half, Lena continues to plan, employing a number of argot items.<sup>49</sup> Also sounding borrowed in the speech of 16 year olds, they draw on the associations with insular criminal trade knowledge and ingroup membership. The purpose of a shift into non-standard here is thus to claim a position of power, inherent in the use of obscene and argot items, masquerading insecurity and ineligibility of power claims that both participants are aware of.

To sum up, cinematic representation of peer-group interaction presupposes the existence of common grounds between the interlocutors. Character identities are often styled through

---

<sup>49</sup> e.g. *клиент*; *наезжать* – to have a go at, to give someone a hard time, lit. to run over, into, Nikolski & Davie 1997: 67, etc.

their negotiation of ingroup belonging, drawing on the associations with ingroup solidarity and familiarity inherent in non-standard language varieties. Importantly, these are not only employed to mark a character's group membership directly (cf. distancing function of non-convergence, common use of non-standard with the positive charge, inclusive function of shift into non-standard), but can also be used to contest and renegotiate interlocutors' relative positions, with the stance taken by the non-standard speaking character rendering higher (cf. common use of non-standard with the negative charge) or lower (cf. integrating function of non-convergence) levels of hostility. Moreover, out-of-character use of non-standard can serve as powerful means of representation of character's emotions, attitudes and conversational goals. Detailed breakdown of strategies and functions of language variation thus identified is presented in Chart 1.



**Chart 1.** Distribution of strategies that employ language variation (left) and function types within standard -> non-standard shift (right) in the cinematic representation of peer-group relations.

## 2.2. Hierarchical relations

As table 3 (p. 135) shows, analysis of interpersonal dynamics cannot be reduced to peer groups, as characters are just as frequently represented through participation in relations of hierarchical nature. The following subsection explores the way slang, argot and obscenities are employed in construction of interpersonal dynamics within hierarchical relations. Although for the purpose of this research hierarchical relations cannot be defined in purely institutional terms, as will be explained below, it is productive to start by outlining the similarities which exist with institutional identities, to then build on and expand these points as required. With many different definitions of institutions proposed, Agar's seems to be the most relevant, defining institutions as 'a socially legitimated expertise together with those

persons authorized to implement it' (1985: 164). This draws attention to the role of social conventions in establishment of institutional relations. Benwell and Stokoe conclude from this definition that 'institutions produce binary and asymmetrical roles' (2006: 88), continuing that conceiving of power, thus assigned to institutions, productively as a *process* or *action*, enables the 'analyst to chart the ways people are 'enlisted' by, demonstrate complicity with, negotiate or resist institutional agendas' (ibid: 89). Seen as such, power, by convention attributed to a specific party, but also potentially contested and renegotiated discursively within the frame of institutional relations, also becomes the central concern of hierarchical relations. Sharing with institutions the aspect of 'socially legitimated' distribution of power roles, social hierarchies are perceived here to surpass the boundaries of specific institutions to include interaction between speakers who are assigned unequal roles due to age difference or conventions of interaction between strangers (e.g. in interaction between host and guest). This initial positioning of speakers constitutes the framework of hierarchical relations, with the following discussion focusing on the strategies employed in representation of characters affirming, contesting and renegotiating conventional distribution of roles through use of slang, argot and obscenities.

Hierarchies that found representation in the researched corpus can be grouped as follows:

- those pertaining to the criminal system (most often between the gang / mafia leader and his associates, but also between criminals and their victim)
- those pertaining to the legal system (police – convict, or within the police system between the policemen of unequal ranks)
- those pertaining to age differences
- those pertaining to the interaction between strangers (including both totally random encounters, and those between service providers and their customers / users of those services)
- those pertaining to the work hierarchy.

	Criminal	Legal	Age	Strangers	Work	Total, units of analysis
St -> NSL	9	8	10	8	8	43
NSL	14	5	3		1	23
Non-conv. difference	5	6	6	5		22
NSL -> Standard	2	4	2	1		9
Total	30	23	21	14	9	97

**Table 6.** Distribution of characterisation strategies by type of hierarchy

Comparing these results to the distribution of strategies within peer-group identity work, some differences become apparent: hierarchical relations make less use of the shift into non-standard (even though it is still the most common strategy) and sole use of non-standard. With regards to the latter, it needs to be noted that the overwhelming majority of instances of mutual use of non-standard (almost two-thirds) was drawn from representation of relations within the criminal system. In way of explanation it may be furthered that the insular nature of the criminal world and the legacy of the original cryptolectal function of argot determine the acceptability of this language within the hierarchical relations. The corresponding subsection will discuss further how this strategy was applied to a variety of encounters.

Two other strategies, non-convergent difference and shift into standard, show increase in use within hierarchical relations, with the latter almost doubling the number of instances. Both strategies are, however, absent from the frame of work relations, which can be speculatively linked to their face-threatening value, avoided within the encounters represented by the current dataset.

### **2.2.1. Non-convergence**

As in the case of peer-group relations, non-convergence within hierarchical relations revolves around boundaries. There is a major difference in the effect though. As described above, the nature of hierarchical relations predetermines the existence of boundaries, and therefore defiance of certain expectations (e.g. of politeness) that come with it can make non-convergence more marked and, potentially, face-threatening than is the case with peer-group relations.

(Fr. singer) Merci.

(Danila) Музыка твоя вся американская – говно\*.

(Fr. singer) Musique? Ah, la musique est très bien, excellent, alors.

(Danila) Ну чё споришь. Тебе говорят говно\* музыка, а ты споришь.

(Fr. singer) Musique...

(Danila) Да и сами вы... Скоро всей вашей Америке кирдык. Вам всем-то в рожу-то устроим. Понял?

(Example 1, B)

This verbal exchange takes place at the party that follows the concert, attended by Danila and Kat. Danila is here shown engaging in conversation with the French singer. Although Danila and the French singer are similar in age and not linked through work, their social roles (performer – audience), as well as them being strangers condition viewers' expectations. Their interaction is expected to be on formal terms, with the most likely type of

conversational exchange to be that of ‘praise – acceptance’. What Danila’s character is shown to do instead is, ultimately, defy all of these expectations. Infelicitous conditions for interaction because of the language barrier are complicated even further by Danila’s use of negative evaluation (‘All your American music is shit’) in place of praise. Misunderstood by the French singer, the conversation effectively turns into two unrelated monologues. The existence of a boundary that precludes any meaningful interaction is further emphasised through the form of Danila’s speech. By using slang (*кирдык, устроить в рожу*) and obscenities (*говно\**), together with anti-American content of his utterances, he doubles the effect of non-convergence by also defying conventions of formal communication between strangers. Although the effect of non-standard use within the context of this interaction is hardly identifiable by the French singer, it draws viewers’ attention to the boundaries that this encounter was subject to from the start, of which Danila’s unwillingness to accommodate for his interlocutor is even more powerful than the linguistic difference in itself. As put by Giles, non-convergence ‘can signal, other things being equal, that a non-converger does not need a listener’s approval or respect’ (2009: 280). Danila’s identity of a loner, which is being constructed in the course of the film, is thus especially pronounced in this scene, since he is here seeking neither a fight nor truth, but effectively constructs boundaries that separate him from the interlocutor and are not open to negotiation.

This exchange also constitutes an example of the *distancing* function of non-convergence, which is overwhelmingly dominant (68%) within the hierarchical dataset. In most cases, and more often than was the case with peer groups, it was used to establish new boundaries between the speakers, rather than affirm the already existent ones. By keeping to the same language variety throughout the verbal exchange, the character was shown to draw on the qualities inherent in it. In this way, obscene language was often used in the representation of criminals’ interaction with their victims, as in the example below:

(Danila) Звони.  
 (Victim) Макар, ты?  
 (Thug 1) Тихо, гад\*. На пол, на пол. Где он?  
 (Victim) Кто?  
 (Thug 1) Не понял, сука\*?  
 (Victim) Не стреляй. К метро, к метро он пошел за водкой, сейчас придет. Не стреляй, не надо.  
 (Thug 2) Нет никого.  
 (Thug 1) Ну смотри, гад\*. Утюг, привяжи его.

(Example 2, B)

In this scene, Danila and the two thugs are shown forcing their way into the victim's flat. Adding 'insult to injury', the thug here does not rely on the sole use of his revolver, but uses obscene (*сука\**, *зад*) insults to establish his dominant position. Insults, according e.g. to Neu (2008), derive their force from denigration, as by likening addressee to an object or behaviour, positioned lower on some scale of evaluation, the speaker positions him/her-self at the higher end of this scale. The stronger the insult, the more powerful is the position claimed by the speaker. In the example above, thug's repetition of insults in every utterance marks his claim to the position of power. It becomes especially prominent in the use of obscene *сука\**. It follows victim's dispreferred turn, in which he is asking for more information. Seeing this as a threat to his authority, thug is shown to increase both physical (bringing the gun closer to the victim's face) and verbal aggression. It needs to be noted, that *сука* is effective in this instance not only because it is the stronger of the two insults, but also because it holds criminal connotations – in prison argot it has the added meaning of 'thief who breaks the thieves' code of honor' (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 194).

Non-convergent use of non-standard within hierarchical relations can be also employed to depict *confrontation* (32%):

(Piskunov) Какая свадьба сорвалась, а? А где костюмчики-то взяли? В Большом театре напрокат, а? Аферюги... А кто же у нас тещь-то, а, Кроликов? Какой-нибудь миллионер.  
 (Innokentii) Я Шнипперсон. И тещь у меня — сенатор. Вот когда он узнает...  
 (Sukhodrishev) Васька! Молодой, а бл... Не колись! Держись до последнего!  
 (Piskunov) Суходрищев! Помолчи! А ты кончай придуриваться, Музыкант... Куда часы доктора дел? На это говно\* сменял?  
 (Innokentii) Эти часы — подарок президента США.

(Example 3, SM)

This exchange takes place in the police station. Piskunov has just detained the orchestra conductor Innokentii in the middle of his wedding, having mistaken him for a con man Vassilii. Believing that the whole wedding is a setup, and even the guests' dresses are rentals, he is persistent in his accusations. The boundaries set up by their social roles (policeman – convict) are complicated by Innokentii being convicted unjustly. The confrontation between the two men is thus framed by the hierarchical roles imposed onto them by the legal system, and their struggle for affirmation (Piskunov) or redefinition (Innokentii) of the prescribed distribution of power. The boundary between the two characters is emphasised through linguistic differences. Innokentii's speech style is strictly

standard and formal, which constructs him as being confident that the mistake will be quickly resolved. Piskunov, on the other hand, is shown to be triumphant about having been able to detain the famous con man, and is now eager to get Innokentii to come clean. He is exercising his formal power and verbally pressing for confession through use of insults (*аферыюги*) and derogation (slang item *придуриваться*,<sup>50</sup> obscene *говно\**). Piskunov's non-convergence to formal speech style refuses his interlocutor conversational parity and marks disregard for presumption of innocence, which is clearly demonstrated by Piskunov's use of the obscene *говно\** in reference to Innokentii's watch. Believing it to be something worthless his interlocutor got for selling the watch that had previously been stolen from the surgeon, Piskunov employs this obscenity to perform his (presumed) knowledge power. Innokentii's rebuke, though, contests the validity of Piskunov's claim, and so the confrontation continues.

Although common use of argot is often presented as the preferred means of communication within the group of criminals, the dangerous task of identity work within the criminal hierarchy can also be shown to rely on non-convergence, as in the following example:

1. (Messenger) Братан звенит, здесь тяги гуляют.
2. (Artur) Бывает гуляют, бывает тянутся. По всякому бывает. Бывает шатун вылезет, и кардан. Сразу ведь не введешь, кто где и кто чей.
3. (Messenger) Меня, короче, Турист послал тут.  
Прорисоваться.
4. (Artur) Хорошо рисуешься.
5. (Messenger) Рад, что ты оценил. Тут, короче, такой базар\* катался, что морячок соскочил, и теперь вилы вылезают двойные.
6. (Artur) Не говори, вилы, грабли, все двойное.  
Понимаешь...
7. (Messenger) Чё ты меня разводишь? Морячок гуляет, а мы забились, что он будет отдыхать, так?
8. (Artur) Он и отдыхает.
9. (Messenger) Как так?
10. (Artur) Да как забились — надёжно, крепко.
11. (Messenger) Но он светился. Час не прошел.
12. (Artur) Светился.
13. (Messenger) Ну дак как же он тогда отдыхает?

(continued on the next page)

---

<sup>50</sup> from *придурок* – a fool, idiot, Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 157.

14. (Artur) Да культурно, как положено морячку отдыхать, так и отдыхает. И отдохнет по полной!
15. (Messenger) Ты подожди... Ты чего мне паришь. Ты говори конкретно, да, чего мне Туристу втирать, чего ты меня разводишь тут. Ты чего, меня провоцируешь, да? Чего ты меня провоцируешь?
16. (Artur) Выбирайте-ка выражения, молодой человек. А когда вы общаетесь с малознакомыми людьми, это принято делать с особой тщательностью.

(Example 4, DCM)

Faced with the Mafia messenger enquiring after the apparent change of circumstances, Artur draws on the ambiguity of argot use to contest the hierarchy of their relations. The character of the messenger is constructed through visual symbols of masculine strength (bodily image) and criminal power (black leather jacket, golden neck chain, expensive 4x4 car), as well as homogeneous speech style. He is relying on the power associations provided by argot use, and some of his utterances consist almost entirely of argot lexis (e.g. the first one). His dominant position is, however, undermined by Artur's non-convergence. Shown as struggling to perceive the meanings that do not belong to the argot use, the messenger is thus constructed as a dumb-head. Artur, on the other hand, succeeds in retaining his preferred position of unaccountability by skilfully avoiding direct answers. Word play (e.g. utterances 2, 6) and the use of argot terms in their standard meanings (e.g. utterances 8, 14) are employed by Artur to confront the messenger's claims, causing thorough confusion in his interlocutor. For example, in the utterances 7-8 and 13-14 Artur exploits the potential for ambiguous understanding of the word *отдыхать*. Meaning 'to rest' in standard language, it is here used by the messenger in its argot meaning 'to go to prison'. Artur, instead, employs *отдыхать* alongside *культурно* (lit. in a cultural manner), pointing at the standard meaning. This covert, but consistent non-convergence marks Artur's rejection of the messenger's authority, which finally gets noticed by the latter in the 15<sup>th</sup> utterance. Artur finishes the verbal exchange by demonstratively employing formal discourse (standard language and use of formal *vy*-form) to emphasise further the boundaries between the two speakers and affirm his now dominant position.

Finally, it needs to be noted that the *integrating* function is absent from the hierarchical dataset. This is unsurprising, though, as non-convergence is more marked within hierarchical relations than within the peer-group interaction, and therefore instances of non-convergent use of non-standard will be regarded as *confrontational* due to their face-threatening nature.

### 2.2.2. Shift from non-standard into standard

This, again, is the least used strategy of on-screen identity work representation. It is, however, almost twice as common in representation of hierarchical relations as in the case of peer-group interaction. Another significant change lies in the finding that within hierarchical relations these shifts are much more often used to show a decrease in tension (67%) rather than an increase (33%).

A shift into standard was found to mark an *increase in tension* in 3 verbal exchanges, and in these instances was linked to either the change of addressee, or the need to step up the voice of authority. The latter can be seen in following example:

- (Racketeer) Ну что, синяки, торгуем? Часы у тебя?  
(German) У-ху.  
(Racketeer) Ну что, по полтинничку теперь. С тебя, гнида синяя, с тебя, я сказал. А ты как думал? Налоги!  
(German) Так я ж ещё ничего, я ещё ничего...  
(Racketeer) Товар конфискую.  
(German) Я ж ещё ничего не продал.  
(Racketeer) Сказал конфискую, понял?  
(German) Сынок, так я ж ещё ничего... ничего не продал ещё...  
(Racketeer) Какая разница. Сказал конфискую, и всё.

(Example 5, B)

This verbal exchange is happening at a flea market. German is trying to sell some watches, when he is approached by a racketeer. The racketeer's speech is initially non-standard. The derogatory slang item *синяки* (drunkards, Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 179) is followed by obscene *гнида* (a scoundrel, bastard, *ibid*: 39), representing an attempt to establish his dominant position through denigration of the interlocutor. German's hesitant response marks his reluctance to acknowledge the racketeer's authority and, consequently, pay the protection money. This triggers off the racketeer's shift into standard, in an attempt to mimic the formal discourse of the financial system (e.g. repetition of the term *конфисковать* – confiscate), drawn on here to substantiate his claims to hierarchical superiority. In this example the discourse of official power, realised through standard language, is therefore presented as a more effective tool of subordination than the language of criminal power (e.g. depreciative power of obscenities).

As is the case with regards to the peer-group relations, a *decrease in tension*, realised through a shift into standard within hierarchical relations, can be linked to the change of

addressee, an attempt to calm down the interlocutor, or the combination of the two, as in the following example:

(Danila) Оружие на пол, руки за голову, всем лежать мордой в пол. Вить, вставай.  
(Viktor) Не стреляй, брат, пожалуйста, не стреляй.  
(Danila) Ты что, брат, вставай давай, всё.  
(Viktor) Прости, брат, не стреляй, пожалуйста, не убивай меня.  
(Danila) Брат! Ты брат мой! Ты ж вместо отца был. Я ж тебя папой называл. Что ты? [...]  
(Danila) [to the thug] А ты скажи своим, что кто брата тронет – завалю. Иди.  
(Thug) Это он тебя сдал.  
(Danila) Знаю.  
(Viktor) Прости меня, брат.  
(Danila) Ну что ты. Деньги где?  
(Viktor) У него в чемодане. Всё забрал, гад\*.  
(Danila) А ты домой езжай, к маме. Старая она уже. Помогать надо. Денег ей вот дашь. На работу устройся, в милицию.

(Example 6, B)

At the centre of this scene is Danila. He is shown here to make an unexpected entrance into Viktor's flat, who is being held captive by thugs from Kruglyi's gang. Danila is shown addressing alternatively the thugs and his brother. When addressing the gangsters, Danila employs rude *морда*<sup>51</sup> and argot *завалить*.<sup>52</sup> Non-standard speech style substantiates the threatening contents of his utterances, and is visually supported by the guns in his hands. When addressing his brother, though, Danila shifts into standard speech. Viktor is shaken by the situation and is expecting revenge from his brother, who he had effectively betrayed. Instead, Danila is calming him down with slow pace of his talk and reminiscences of times spent together. Lexical variation is thus employed in Danila's speech to differentiate between the addressees, with standard in this case reserved for the more intimate, brotherly talk, marking Danila's attempt to ease the tension.

The other reason for shift into standard, identified in the dataset, is to mark the change from negatively evaluated subject of speech to the one approved of and longed for. Such is the reason for shift in Irka's speech:

---

<sup>51</sup> (lit. animal's muzzle) face, Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 119.

<sup>52</sup> (lit. to knock down) to kill, Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 94.

(Vania) А откуда у тебя столько денег? Ирка! Ир!  
 (Irka) Чего ты на меня так смотришь? Котёл общий, значит для всех, и для тебя тоже.  
 (Vania) А Колян?  
 (Irka) А что Колян? Слишком круто под бугра косит. Я птица вольная, я не люблю, когда меня душат, да и тебя заплевали не по делу. Съездим – посмотрим. Найдём – не найдём, хоть ясность будет, да и ты дуришь перестанешь  
 (Vania) Верно, Ирка.  
 (Irka) А вообще, я на юг собиралась. А может мамашку твою найдём, так вместе и устроимся? Ай, ладно, чего гадать, там видно будет.

(Example 7, I)

Irka's speech in the first half of this exchange is marked by a large number of slang items (*котёл, круто, бугор, косить, душить*, etc), which in this instance renders her negative attitude towards the hierarchy established within the orphanage's adolescent peer group. Once the subject turns to prospects for their future, Irka shifts into a more standard speech style. This emphasises that there is no place for the near-criminal adolescent gang-groups in her dream future, where Vania is included but the others aren't.

### 2.2.3. Common use of non-standard

The presupposed connotation of familiarity, inherent in the use of non-standard by all of the speakers within a verbal exchange, explains the more frequent use of such a strategy within peer-group relations than within hierarchical interaction. As mentioned earlier, however, this decrease is not very significant: from 28% to 24%. Importantly, though, it constitutes the overall preferred strategy for representation of identity work within hierarchical relations pertaining to the criminal world. In this case, the connotation of commonality contributes to the *positive charge* of such lexical usage (71% of such usages pertaining to the criminal world are positively charged), and as such is often employed in establishing characters' common belonging to the criminal world.

(Thug) Это был не Татарин. Молодой. Всё классно сделал. Профессионал. Чечен кони двинул, а этот ушел. Сел на трамвай жёлтый и ушел. Я его, гада\*, подстрелил. Он, сука\*, Шишу замочил.  
 (Kruglyi) Шишу? Наглухо?  
 (Thug) Не знаю. В больницу отвезли.  
 (Kruglyi) А чего ты стрелял, если это не Татарин?  
 (Thug) Так я...

(continued on the next page)

(Kruglyi) Деньги-то все равно Татарину платить, башка твоя баранья. А то, что новый Шишу замочил, - хорошо, на нас не подумают.

(Example 8, B)

This exchange is between Kruglyi, the gang leader, and one of the thugs, who is here reporting on the murder that Kruglyi had contracted Danila's brother to perform, but which was instead executed by Danila. Both of the interlocutors employ non-standard throughout this verbal exchange. The authority of Kruglyi is not undermined by the fact that his subordinate is addressing him in non-standard language; quite the opposite, similarities in speech style emphasise their involvement in the same 'business'. Their mutual use of argot styles them as belonging to the criminal world, with argot items predominantly used to refer to the criminal activities: e.g. *замочить*,<sup>53</sup> *уйти*. Apart from the indexes of commonality, lexical use in this verbal exchange marks performance of the hierarchical roles of the interlocutors. Both speakers employ derogatory insults, but the difference in subjects is crucial. The thug uses obscene *сука\**, *зад\** to refer to Danila who had killed his mate. These insults clearly signal the thug's animosity towards Danila, but what they also do is shift responsibility for partial failure of their mission, and thus construct the thug as subordinate and accountable to Kruglyi. The latter, on the other hand, uses *башка твоя баранья* (cf. meathead) as a direct insult to his interlocutor, thus exercising his power. In this exchange, therefore, non-standard is used both to mark commonality and to index the differences between the characters with regards to their hierarchical positions.

While the positive charge of much of the mutual use of non-standard in representation of the criminal world can be attributed to the higher importance of emphasis on ingroup similarities than on hierarchical differences, occurrences of mutual use of non-standard within the framework of legal relations, especially between police and convicts, cannot be explained in a similar way, and therefore defy viewers' expectations. It is this discrepancy between the expected adherence to the conventions of formal interaction and the actual use of non-standard that is being exploited in representation of the work of the law enforcement system in the comedy genre. The way comic effect can thus be achieved can be seen in the following extract:

---

<sup>53</sup> to kill, to do in, Nikolski & Davie 1997: 65.

(Piskunov) Свидетель, сейчас харю набью... Но то, чтобы в Америке...  
(US Ambassador) Его последний концерт в Белом доме транслировался во все страны мира.  
(Sukhodrishev) Капитан! Этого пидора в Химках видал. Деревянными членами торгует...  
(US Ambassador) В моем лице вы оскорбляете великую страну. Я вам делаю первое серьезное предупреждение.  
(Piskunov) Суходрищев, сейчас глаз на жопу\* натяну...

(Example 9, SM)

The scene takes place at a police station. The verbal exchange is between the police officer Piskunov, the convict Sukhodrishev and the US Ambassador. Sukhodrishev's speech in this and preceding utterances is characteristically non-standard. For example, in this exchange he employs the obscene insult *пидор*.<sup>54</sup> While Sukhodrishev's speech style is a stereotypical marker of his social role, Piskunov's use of profane *харя* (face, mug) and obscene expression *глаз на жопу натяну\** defies viewers' expectations of police officer having to abide by the conventions of formal communication. The discrepancy between Piskunov's social role and his speech style is further emphasised by the presence of the US Ambassador, who is shown to be strictly adhering to the norms of the standard language. Piskunov's speech style is therefore presented against the backdrop of the two ends of the linguistic spectrum: homogeneous non-standard use of Sukhodrishev and consistent standard use of the Ambassador. Piskunov's use of non-standard in this instance defies viewers' expectations and approximates him to Sukhodrishev. This not only creates the comic effect in this particular scene, but also renders film's macro-level message that is concerned with the blurring of boundaries between the legal and the illegal in Russia of the 1990s.

Finally, common use of non-standard by speakers of unequal social standing can, as in the case of peer-group relations, express shared emotions and emphasise characters' unity in a cause, as in the example below:

---

<sup>54</sup> (lit. homosexual) often used as an insult – bastard, scoundrel, cf. Shlyakhov & Adler 2006 : 199.

(Grigorii) Чёрт!  
(Zhanna Arkadievna) Ну, так не успеть. Он на конечную едет? Вот мы там его и встретим. Милицию подключим. Не уйдёт, паршивец. Поехали дальше.

Example 10 (I)

This verbal exchange is between Zhanna Arkadievna, an officer from the child adoption bureau, and her driver Grigorii. When they arrive just a second too late to be able to catch the train which Vania is suspected to have boarded, both of them are shown to use language cathartically. The context of failure creates common grounds that allow for the obscene *чёрт*<sup>55</sup> and derogatory *паршивец* (cf. yobbo, chav) to be employed without regard for the hierarchical relations that under other circumstances determine the more formal style of interaction.

Mutual cathartic use of non-standard does not, however, always signal unity, but may also be used to represent the *negative charge* of interpersonal dynamics. In the example below, the thugs from Kruglyi's gang are giving a beating to Sveta, who is putting up a fight:

(Sveta) Он провёл у меня два дня. Но он сам меня нашел.  
Прогнала я его уже. Я правду говорю.  
(Kruglyi) Любишь медок - люби и холодок.  
(Sveta) Пустите.  
(Thug 1) Не рыпайся.  
(Thug 2) Пинается...  
(Sveta) Сволочи\*... не трогайте... гад\*... пусти!  
(Thug 1) У, сука\*, убью!  
(Sveta) Сволочь\*.  
(Thug 1) Вяжи... ноги...

(Example 11, B)

For a large part of the scene Sveta is shown fighting with the thugs. The visual imagery is supported by the string of derogatory and obscene remarks from both sides: *рыпаться*,<sup>56</sup> *сволочь\**, *гад\**, *сука\**. These emotionally charged items render the highest level of tension between the interlocutors.

---

<sup>55</sup> (lit. devil) used as a term of abuse or disgust, cf. damn it! Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 311.

<sup>56</sup> to thrash about, wriggle around, Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 233.

As shown in this example with regards to obscenities, the most common purpose of negatively charged mutual use of non-standard is to give lexical representation to the tension between the characters. Within hierarchical relations such tension is often caused by one of the characters refusing to abide by the presupposed social hierarchy. This can find representation in verbal cross-fire, as in the following example:

(Grigorii) Слышь, зеркала от Волги ты свинтил?  
(Kolian) Какой Волги?  
(Grigorii) Ты дурачка-то не валяй!  
(Kolian) Какого дурачка? Где ты его увидел? В зеркале что-ли?  
Ты поменьше туда смотришь.  
(Timokha) А то опять пропадёт.  
(Grigorii) Ну, смотри. В следующий раз поймаю – ноги в жопу  
вобью.  
(Kolian) Фильтруй базар\*, мужик. Как бы тебе чего не вырвали.  
(Grigorii) Ну, не учёные ещё.

(Example 12, I)

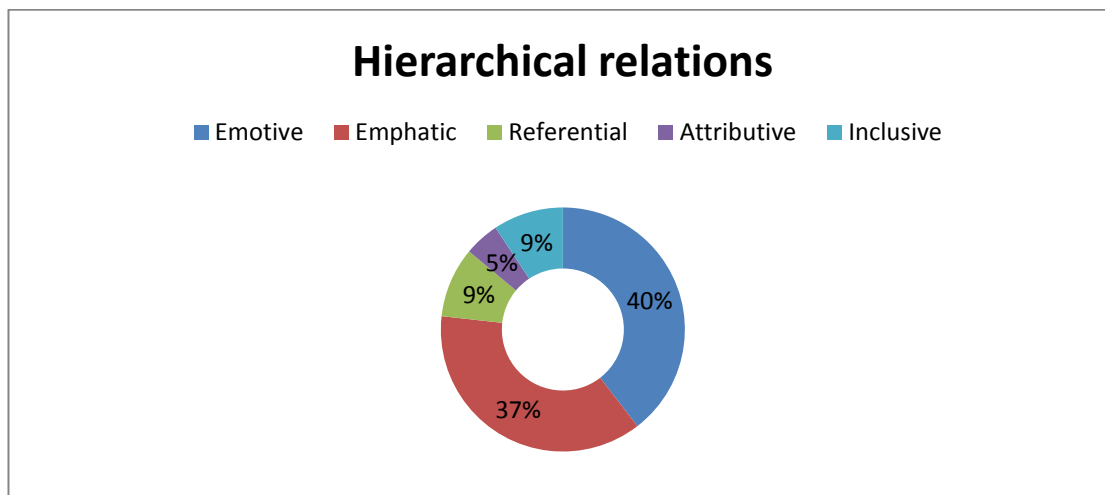
This exchange is between Grigorii and the two adolescents from the orphanage, Kolian and Timokha. Grigorii is assuming his superior position, because of the age difference and his connection to the authority of Zhanna Arkadievna. Kolian, however, has his own authority at stake: he is the accepted leader of the orphanage community. When Grigorii makes an accusation, which is face-threatening for Kolian, the latter is shown to contest Grigorii's authority. The conversation turns into a verbal cross-fire, in which the two interlocutors are employing non-standard. Grigorii is the first one to resort to an obscene threat - *ноги в жопу вобью*<sup>57</sup> - thus claiming his right as an adult and as Kolian's hierarchical superior to the use of strong language. He is drawing on the derogatory nature of insults to establish his authority. Kolian, however, breaks this hierarchy by converging to Grigorii's non-standard speech style to claim his conversational parity. Employing argot expression *фильтруй базар\** and reversing the threat, he draws on the connotations of power inherent in argot use to convey his unwillingness to perform subordination. In this case, mutual use of non-standard marks the tension between the characters, giving lexical realisation to their disagreement regarding their respective hierarchical positions.

---

<sup>57</sup> lit. will hammer your legs into your ass.

#### 2.2.4. Shift from standard into non-standard

The shift into non-standard is the most common identity-work strategy in the analysed dataset. With regards to the hierarchical relations, again, five functions were identified and analysed, with their distribution roughly mirroring the one of the peer-group relations:



**Chart 2.** Distribution of function types within standard -> non-standard shift

As the chart shows, the predominant majority of such shifts was found to serve either the emotive (17 cases) or the emphatic (16 cases) function, combined accounting for 77% of the uses.

The *emotive* function of such shift often relates to the cathartic use of obscenities, and within the frame of hierarchical relations becomes even more marked than in the case of peer-group.

(Zhanna Ark.) Ой, Гриша, какие у тебя руки. Гриш, мы не успеем.  
(Grigorii) Успеем.  
(Zhanna Ark.) Обед скоро принесут.  
(Grigorii) Подождут с обедом-то.  
(Zhanna Ark.) Чёрт. Подожди. [on the phone] Даа. Да, хорошо.  
Сейчас приеду. [to Grigorii] Ну, подожди. Милиция трёх мальчишек задержала. Вот что такое материальный стимул. Надо поехать проверить.  
(Grigorii) Ничего, успеем.  
(Zhanna Ark.) Ну не глупи, Гриша.  
(Grigorii) Ну, Жанна, ну куда они денутся из милиции-то?  
(Zhanna Ark.) Ты не понял? Пошёл вниз, быстро.  
(Grigorii) А обед, Жанна Аркадьевна?  
(Zhanna Ark.) Перебьёшься.  
(Grigorii) Сука\* старая.

(Example 13, I)

The relations between Grigorii and Zhanna Arkadievna undergo several changes within this sequence. In the first half of the conversation, they are depicted as amorous. This is rendered through Zhanna Arkadievna's soft tone of voice and the use of diminutive Grisha. Both speakers are using standard language. The situation changes following the phone call. Grigorii's reluctance to leave immediately prompts Zhanna Arkadievna's abrupt change back into her authoritative persona. She no longer suggests, but orders (cf. *Пошёл вниз, быстро*) and uses the rude *перебьёшься* (used as a disparaging form of refusal). Grigorii bows to the hierarchy that is thus re-established, employing formal form of address Zhanna Arkadievna. However, it is followed by the obscene insult *сука\* старая*, which conveys his frustration. This heavily emotive comment, taken in the context of their return to the hierarchical relations, marks not only Grigorii's animosity to Zhanna Arkadievna on the personal level, but also his dissatisfaction with the subordinate position that is assigned to him within their relations.

Within the analysed dataset, the emotive function was also found to operate in the representation of foreign characters, as in the example below:

(Nicole, in French) Извините.  
(Client, in French) Вы знаете, при свете они выглядят ещё более развратными.  
(Nicole, in French) Что?  
(Client, in French) Глаза. В то время, как у моей Адели глаза были кроткими, добрыми.  
(Nicole) Ты мерзавец, дура, сволочь\*, блядь\*!

(Example 14, WP)

This verbal exchange is between Nicole, a professional taxidermist, and her client. In the preceding turns, Nicole is presented as accommodating to her client's needs, with the standard language use and polite manner marking acknowledgment of their unequal social roles. In this instance, though, frustrated with her client's ever-changing demands and tired of the constant interruptions by her neighbours, Nicole bursts out into string of Russian obscene (*сволочь\**, *блядь\**) and profane insults (*мерзавец*, *дура*) directed at her client, thus indexing her emotional agitation, needing release. With Nicole being French, such a shift is unexpected for the viewer, marking it even further. The contrast constructed in this scene between the formal conditions of interactions and sudden use of obscenities is thus further emphasised by the foreignness of the speaker.

*Emphatic* quality of the shift into non-standard is widely used to underscore the importance that is attributed by the standard speaker to his or her statement. This, again, becomes more marked within the hierarchical relations, as in the following exchange between Roman Almazov and the TV reporter:

(Reporter) Скажите, а вот псевдоним Алмазов Вы взяли в честь  
Вашего алмаза, который у Вас в животе, да?  
(Almazov) Нет, я всю жизнь был и буду Алмазовым, а вот как ты  
был ГОВНОМ\*, так им и останешься... Козёл\*...

(Example 15, SM)

Almazov, who in the previous scenes was presented as a standard speaker, is here being interviewed by a TV reporter. The verbal exchange takes place in the police station following Almazov's detention on suspicion of him having swallowed the world's largest diamond. Mistaken for his twin brother, who he is not aware of, Almazov is infuriated and refuses to assume the social role of a detainee. The reporter's awkward pun on his surname (*алмаз – Алмазов*) provokes this shift into non-standard. With Almazov being a typical Gypsy surname, an origin Roman is very proud of, this shift represents his wounded pride. Almazov employs the obscene expression that likens his interlocutor to *говно*\*, at once contesting the social hierarchy of their relations, and emphasising his pride in the authenticity of his surname.

Similarly, the type of lexis employed by the orphanage's janitor in interaction with Vania reveals the importance he attaches to the matters that are being discussed:

(Janitor) Приходила тут одна зимой, на коленях стояла. Помогите сына найти. А раньше чем думала? С милицией несколько раз увозили, всё равно возвращалась. Потом пропала куда-то. Вот и тебя с милицией увезут. Потому как ты беглец, и мать твоя от тебя отказалась. От такого парня отказалась, стерва\*. Знаешь, почему я не стал полковником?  
(Vania) Почему?  
(Janitor) Задницу\* никому не лизал. И ответственность всегда брал на себя.

Example 16 (I)

The janitor's speech is shown in the beginning of this exchange as standard and converging to Vania's age. The shift into non-standard occurs at the point when he brings up the topic of Vania being an abandoned child. He then refers to his mother with obscene *стерва*\*. He

follows on to describe himself as someone who *задницу никому не лизал\**, thus emphasising his strong opinion on these two subjects and the emotions stirred by Vania's appearance.

Decrease in the use of *referential* function within the hierarchical relations can be related to the heightened formality of interaction underscored by the initial use of the standard. Referential use of slang and argot can give out signals about ingroup belonging to marginal social groups, which may be potentially face-threatening for the speaker in the context of formal communication. This determines quantitative decrease in the use of this function, as well as its introduction in speech through mitigating devices. For example, the exchange below shows referential use of argot presented in the form of reported speech:

(Artur) А они вообще моряки-то военные или торговые?  
(Lena's mother) Я не разобралась. Я без очков была. А там он один только в форме и был.  
(Artur) Жалко.  
(Lena's mother) Я другого спросила - такого, большого: «Вы давно из рейса?» А он мне говорит: «Я, мамаша, давно в ходки не хожу». Вот так вот. И вот так вот. И говорит: «Меня, говорит, на бережку подкачивает». Ну разве можно так к работе относиться...

(Example 17, DCM)

This exchange takes place at Lena's mother's house. Artur and his friend Marina, who is present but does not contribute to this exchange, invited themselves to the house, pretending to be Lena's former colleagues wanting to congratulate the mother on the daughter's wedding. Their main purpose, though, is to find out more about the circumstances of the wedding, as well as the daughter's current whereabouts. The interlocutors are shown to perform hierarchical roles, with Lena's mother being attributed the role of 'host' and 'senior' in terms of the age. Formal conditions of interaction are emphasised when Lena's mother is reporting the words of the presumed sailors. Hedged off by quotation marks, the argot item *ходки*<sup>58</sup> appears in Lena's mother's speech as an alien fragment, relating to the world of the antagonised characters, rather than her own. In this instance, the referential use of argot implicates the original speaker in his involvement with the criminal circles, which is apparent for Artur, Marina and the film's audience. The hedging used by Lena's mother in her report of this statement, as well as her attempts to connect this sentence to the conditions

---

<sup>58</sup> prison terms, convictions, Aleksandrov 2001:127.

of the sailing job, on the opposite, mark her as being ignorant of the criminal connections of her son-in-law and his friends. Hedged use of slang and argot in their referential function can, therefore, distance the speaker from the social indexes, inherent in these lexical varieties, making it more acceptable for use within the context of formal communication.

A similar decrease was found in the use of the *inclusive* function of a shift into non-standard. As in the case of peer-group interaction, such a shift draws on the associations of non-standard lexis with ingroup familiarity. In the case of hierarchical relations, though, the social boundaries between the interlocutors are perceived as more rigid, leading to the use of a shift into non-standard for inclusive purposes to be marked as transgressive. The identified examples help shed the light on the reasons that can justify the face-threatening act of transgression of social boundaries within hierarchical relations.

(Igor) О! Пьяная какая! Значит, не обманули. Ну, здравствуй, деточка, здравствуй, милая.  
(Ksiusha) Что ты хочешь, а?  
(Igor) Так, и в том, что хамишь, как школьница, тоже не обманули. А вот, что расползлась совсем — это ревнуют просто. Слушай, одеваешься как всегда, лучше всех. Ну, поздоровайся со старым другом.

(Example 18, DCM)

This verbal exchange takes place by the entrance to the airport, where Ksiusha had been left waiting for Rinat to come back with the tickets. She has by now lost hope and started drinking the cognac that she had brought for Rinat earlier. At this moment she is approached by her former choreographer, who is now keen to persuade her to join his new ballet group. In terms of the hierarchical positions, then, Igor is the superior, but the pressing urgency of getting a stand-in ballet dancer makes him the one who is seeking acceptance, in this example attempted by drawing on the air of familiarity inherent in the non-standard. Although in the following exchanges he is represented predominantly through the standard speech style which matches his social role, here he is employing non-standard. The slang item *расползлась*<sup>59</sup> enhances the effect of familiarity produced by his tone of voice, the use of diminutive forms of address (*деточка, милая*) and ‘baby-talk’-like way of speaking. The formal speech-style, required by the hierarchical relations and Ksiusha’s reluctance to

---

<sup>59</sup> (lit. to sprawl) to put on weight.

engage in this conversation, is therefore being substituted with the more intimate one, in order to conciliate his interlocutor.

As this example shows, when the social boundaries are being transgressed by a superior in order to benefit from the air of familiarity thus constructed, this signals the presence of a hidden agenda of such interaction. The dataset has also provided examples of social boundaries being transgressed from the side of the subordinate. Such a case is represented in the following exchange:

(Bus conductor) А платить кто за вас будет?  
(Passenger) Да вышвырните их отсюда к чёртовой матери...

(Example 19, WP)

When Nikolai and Nicole enter the bus without paying, they are reproached by the conductor, who is given support by one of the passengers. The obscene statement *вышвырните к чёртовой матери* (lit. throw them out to devil's mother) that she makes denigrates Nikolai and Nicole. This contests the hierarchy of their respective positions: instead of being positioned in the same social group of passengers as Nikolai and Nicole, with the conductor conceived as the superior figure of authority, she seeks to be included in the same group of 'rightdoers' as the conductor, opposed to the group of wrong-doers, like Nikolai and Nicole. Inclusive function of shift into non-standard can thus provide linguistic tool of approximation to the position of power that the hierarchically superior interlocutor holds.

Finally, 2 examples of the *attributive* function were identified. Without seeking to make any far-reaching conclusions due to the scarcity of this sample, it is possible to extend here what has been said previously about the overall implications of the shift into non-standard within hierarchical relations: identity work of characters in the subordinate position that draws on the connotations of power and / or familiarity is potentially dangerous and face-threatening, and the impression given out to the viewers is often that of impudence.

(Katia) Ой, Леночка, ну пожалуйста, сделай мне один раз, я точно не попаду.  
(Makar's uncle) Попадешь-попадешь. Все попадают. Сидеть. Куда ж ты попасть ломишься, малютка? Ведь сядешь на это дело — не соскочишь. Брось ты эту дрянь, сгноит она тебя. Адом проклинать будешь.

(continued on the next page)

(Lena) Давай, дед, проходи. Собирай свои бутылки. Нет их на этой площадке.  
 (Makar's uncle) Дед, говоришь? А мне 42, не поверишь. А начинал как ты. Вдруг кубика черного перло тоже. А сейчас восемь героина не рубят.  
 (Lena) Ну и хрен\* ли тебе надо. Иди, ментов\* зови. А хоть пальцем меня тронешь — баян\* раздавлю, в рожу вцеплюсь, кричать буду.  
 (Makar's uncle) А ты покричи-покричи. Думаешь, выйдет кто-нибудь, или в ментуру позвонит? Весь парадняк уши к дверям прижмет и слушать будет... ботва... они интересное любят. Ну, допустим, менты\* приехали. Я-то выкручусь, а покажи им твои ручки исколотые, и посадят тебя в изолятор неделю кумарить\* будут, а потом положат перед тобой шприц — и не с этой черной дрянью, а героинчика. Кубиков 10 чистенького. Тут-то ты всех своих друзей и сольешь.

(Example 20, DCM)

This verbal exchange takes place immediately after Katia and Lena, planning to get a drug injection, were spotted by Makar's uncle. Being a stranger to them, and much senior in age, he employs drug slang and argot to emphasise his knowledge power and stop them from getting addicted. Although foregrounded here by the context of situation, such non-standard speech-style is characteristic of Makar's uncle, as represented by his turns in the other verbal exchanges (cf. ex. 15, p. 149-150). Lena's attempt to match it, on the opposite, appears forced and presumptuous due to her inferior position. In this exchange, she employs slang *хрен ли тебе надо\** followed by argot *менты\** and drug slang expression *баян раздавлю\** to claim conversational parity with Makar's uncle. The latter is, however, the incontestable winner of this verbal cross-fire, due to his intimate knowledge of the police procedures, signalled not only by the contents but also by the form of his next turn (argot *ментура*, *ботва*, *сливать*; drug slang *кумарить\**, *дрянь*, *кубик*). In this instance, Lena's attempt to draw on the knowledge power inherent in argot and drug slang use presented against the backdrop of an interlocutor who is socially superior to her, marks her impudence rather than her criminal/ drug scene ingroup knowledge. This example can be further compared to ex. 27 (p.162), where Lena's attributive argot use was employed within peer-group interaction. The difference is apparent: the lexical use that marked Lena's leadership and authority within her peer group, within the context of hierarchical relations has worked to mark her inferiority and inadequacy of her claimed knowledge.

In sum, cinematic representation of identity work within hierarchical relations relies on the same strategies as in the case of peer-group relations. Although the distribution of strategies

is overall similar, some significant differences need to be noted. With hierarchical relations presupposing conditions of formal communication, any deviations from the use of standard language become more marked and are perceived as transgressive. This resulted in redefinition of functions assigned to various strategies, with patterns of behaviour marked through non-standard in representation of peer group interaction not always deemed relevant or appropriate for hierarchical relations, as in the disappearance of the integrating function of non-convergence from the hierarchical dataset. In other instances, the discrepancy between the use of non-standard and conditions of formal communication was shown to empower filmmakers, enabling them, for example, to use language variation as lexical resource for representation of rebellious behaviour. And yet, it is not just the inter-speaker tension and subversion of existing hierarchies that can be rendered through the use of non-standard, but performance of hierarchical roles as well: for example, common use of non-standard within criminal hierarchies, the use of obscenities for the distancing function of non-convergence.

Focusing on the interpersonal dimension of identity work, this section showed how lexical variation can mark the characters' positioning in relations to each other. The next section will turn to the other dimension of character identity styling, exploring how the use of language variation can reveal characters' orientation towards social configurations and discourses.

### **Section 3. Ideational level**

This section aims to shed light on the strategies by which the use of lexical variation becomes operational in positioning characters in relation to societal structure and discourses. Believing that the interpersonal dimension is just one of the facets of human interaction, I find it important to enhance the preceding analysis of the interpersonal dimension of character identity work with further enquiry into the ideational dimension. As suggested by McInnes & Corlett, ‘individuals position themselves relative to, and in turn are positioned by, the ideational notions of who they should be and how they should act that are informed both by societal discourses and local debates’ (2012: 27). The ideational level thus refers to the framework of ideas that condition individual’s behaviour. In the case of cinematic characters, ideational aspects will be foregrounded only insofar as they project qualities relevant for the characterisation.

Bringing in Coupland’s observation that ‘the identificational value and impact of linguistic features depends on which discursive frame is in place’ (2007: 112), it is possible to argue that the relevance of the ideational level is determined by the context and purpose of the encounter. Irrelevant in some instances, ideational aspects may in other cases exert deep-level influence, forming part of habitual and non-reflexive identity-work patterns. At times, though, they may become foregrounded as the core subject of identity negotiation. With regards to cinematic representation, it is possible to conceive of the ideational level as active when representation of character’s orientation towards social structures and discourses is pertinent for the purpose of characterisation. In this section I am thus looking at instances of linguistic representation of identity work that concern themselves with social structures and discourses.

The dataset for the following discussion consists of those verbal exchanges, drawn from the six film scripts, which were found to have an active ideational level. This dataset in part duplicates the one used in the previous section of this chapter, as in many cases both interpersonal and ideational aspects are simultaneously active in the representation of characters’ identity work. Discussion of the ideational level, however, does not limit itself to the micro-level analysis of those verbal exchanges but was further supplemented, where necessary, with macro-analysis of character identities. This helped to determine conditions for the activation of the ideational aspect and uncover wider character styling functions of these instances.

To make the methodological approach clearer, it is possible to draw attention to an anti-example, the verbal exchange that has been discussed above in ex. 11 (p. 146). In this case, although the phrase ‘*все мы тут в зовне\* живем*’ refers to the social structure, the ideational level remains inactive. As was pointed out above, the function of the obscenity *зовно\** here is to provide reconciliation between the members of the group, by repeating and thus decreasing the shock value of the obscene item. In this instance, then, it is the interpersonal level only that is foregrounded by the lexical use. For this statement to become an active realisation of the ideational level, it would need to be presented as being of particular significance to the character’s identity, for example, as a strong-felt criticism of the current social conditions. In those cases, where reference to the social world is not of personal importance to any of the interlocutors, ideational aspect will be considered inactive.

Analysis of the use of language variation within the active ideational frame, thus conducted, enabled to identify two functions, pertaining to the dynamics of characters’ identity work:

- Expressive
- Performative.

The remaining part of the section will discuss these two functions in detail.

### 3.1. Expressive function

The expressive function of the use of non-standard within the ideational frame is to explicitly state an attitude towards a social phenomenon or a societal discourse. Strong opinions about aspects of social life, rendered through style shifting, can be important for the construction of individual character identities, for the plot development, as well as have major repercussions for the macro-level message presented by a film.

Name of the film	Expressive (incl. metalinguistic)
<i>Окно в Париж</i> (WP)	8
<i>Особенности национальной охоты</i> (PNH)	4
<i>Ширли-Мырли</i> (SM)	11
<i>Брат</i> (B)	5
<i>Мама не горюй</i> (DCM)	11
<i>Итальянец</i> (I)	7
Total	46

**Table 7.** Distribution of units of analysis of the expressive function by film

46 instances of the use of expressive function were identified across all six films. What follows is a selection of expressive uses of non-standard within the ideational frame:

Да, конечно, такие, как ты, и выйдут, и войдут в любую жопу. А вот мой партбилет всегда при мне. И умру вместе с ним!  
(Example 1, Fiodor, WP)

Музыка твоя вся американская – говно\*. [...] Да и сами вы... Скоро всей вашей Америке кирдык. Вам всем-то в рожу-то устроим.  
(Example 2, Danila, B)

На цыганщину соблазнились. Поступились принципами, суки\* рваные...  
(Example 3, Innokentii, SM)

А что Колян? Слишком круто под бугра косит. Я - птица вольная, я не люблю, когда меня душат, да и тебя заплевали не по делу.  
(Example 4, Irka, I)

In these utterances, characters are shown to construct their identities not so much in relation to their interlocutor, but mainly in relation to a particularly significant part of social configuration. The identity of a communist, Russian, classical music conductor and a free-spirited teen are foregrounded here through the explicit negative evaluation of the antagonistic social groups and phenomena. Drawing on the emphatic qualities of non-standard, most frequently obscenities, the characters thus index their social identities.

These utterances are at times operational on both ideational and interpersonal levels – as in Irka’s conversation with Vania (cf. ex.7, p.172), or Fiodor’s conversation with his neighbours, but they can also be made without any regard for the interlocutor, as in the remaining two cases. I suggest looking more closely at an extract from the film *Brother* that shows how expressive function of non-standard can become operational on the macro-level.

(Danila) Музыка твоя вся американская – ГОВНО\*.  
(Fr. singer) Musique? Ah, la musique est très bien, excellent, alors.  
(Danila) Ну чё споришь. Тебе говорят ГОВНО\* музыка, а ты споришь.  
(Fr. singer) Musique...  
(Danila) Да и сами вы... Скоро всей вашей Америке кирдык. Вам всем-то в рожу-то устроим. Понял?  
(Kat) Чё ты к нему пристал. Он француз вообще. Пошли.  
(Danila) Какая разница.

(Example 5, B)

Danila's search for his own identity throughout the film determines his convergence to and divergence from a variety of lifestyles. This verbal exchange takes place during his attempt to try out youth subculture and happens at a post-concert party. Discussed in the previous section (ex.1, p. 165) with regards to the interpersonal dynamics, this verbal exchange needs to be further elaborated upon with regards to the ideational level. As mentioned above, the language barrier precludes any meaningful conversation from happening, so this exchange turns effectively into Danila's identity statement. Using a combination of obscene (*говно\**) and slang (*кирдык, устроить в рожу*) items, Danila draws on their denigrating qualities. First, focusing directly on his interlocutor, he then, by using the plural form of the verb, establishes himself as belonging to the group, which presumably relates to the opposition Russia–USA. Such a style-shift (compared to standard speech employed by Danila in a large part of the film dialogue) enables Danila to claim belonging to the position of power: the unnamed 'us' as opposed to 'them'. The exact composition of the outgroup is of no concern, and the difference between American and French identity is deemed irrelevant.

This instance of identity construction through claims of ingroup belonging and emphasis on the opposition to an outgroup is typical of Danila's character development in this film. What is more, repercussions of this scene echoed further in the following release in the year 2000 of the sequel *Брам 2*, which narrates the story of Danila's trip to the United States. Imbued with nationalistic sentiments, *Брам 2* builds on the mood originally constructed in the abovementioned sequence, and the stance Danila assumes here provides key for his identity construction in the sequel.

Metalinguistic discussions, although not very numerous present within the researched material (4 instances), constitute another realisation of the expressive function of non-standard. They, too, make overt references to social structures and discourses. By drawing attention to the language used by the interlocutor, these discussions, at times inadvertently, touch upon the validity of social configurations indexed by the employed lexis.

(Innokentii) Проститутка! Чтобы духу твоего здесь не было!  
 (Vassilii) Любимая! Я тебе сейчас всё объясню...  
 (Innokentii) Ты ещё здесь, блядь\* заморская?  
 (Vassilii) Ну разве так можно с женщиной-то... [...] Куда же ты...  
 куда же ты? [...] Вот загонял! Аж вспотел даже. Всё будет  
 хорошо. ОК, в смысле.  
 (Carol) Darling!  
 (Innokentii) Убью суку\*!

(Example 6, SM)

The verbal exchange is between the two twin brothers, Innokentii and Vassilii, and Carol, Innokentii's fiancée, who he has discovered to be unknowingly kissing Vassilii. Carol is shown sitting on the bed, watching the two identical men run in and out of the room, shouting at her with conflicting information. Carol's confusion apart, though, this scene presents a fine example of metalinguistic comment: when Innokentii shouts yet another abuse at his fiancée, employing obscene *блядь\**, Vassilii reproaches him for his choice of words, which effectively questions the configuration of gender relations that are constructed by Innokentii's insults.

Metalinguistic discussions also emphasise explicitly evaluative nature of the contested instances of non-standard use, bringing to viewer's attention the attitudes encoded in language. This is foregrounded in Makar's uncle's statement:

(Makar) Да, разводишь ты, конечно, реально. Тебе, наверно, всё равно, с кем тереть-то. Всех развел, сказочник. Артура развел, девок на баян\* развел.  
(Uncle) Это ты, малыш, разводишь, а я разговоры разговариваю.  
И иногда базар\* держу. А у девочек я в школе бабки\* не отбирал.

(Example 7, DCM)

Uncle's rebuff to Makar makes it clear that among the number of synonyms that can be used to describe the process of conversing (sl. *разводить*,<sup>60</sup> *тереть*, *держат базар\** vs. standard *разговаривать*), the one employed by his nephew is the most denigrating. By contesting Makar's words, his Uncle signals his ideational position with respect to the social act of conversing, attributing importance to the higher status indexed by the argot expression *держат базар\** (within the criminal world) and the standard term *разговаривать*.

### 3.2. Performative function

Non-standard was found to operate performatively in those instances of styling that render characters' understanding of who they are and how they should behave. Although very often also forming part of the interpersonal frame, on the ideational level such instances represent characters' engagement with social configurations and discourses. At times marking

---

<sup>60</sup> also has the meaning of: to lie, to deceive, Elistratov 2007: 342.

essentialized view of the social world, at other times performative use of non-standard may extend or subvert the character's participation in the social categories. When the verbal exchange does not have a significant interpersonal dimension, performance of social roles becomes the central concern of characterisation.

(Vera) Горохов!  
(Gorokhov to Nikolai) У, твою мать... Верка дверь нашла. Всё, я  
линию. Так, слушай. На, держи изделие. Да аккуратней будь, тут  
СПИД на каждом шагу.  
(Vera) Где тебя черти носят? Сволочь\* такая, паскуда!

(Example 8, WP)

In this scene Vera Gorokhova, having discovered the window to Paris, is calling out her husband. The viewer sees Gorokhov wrapping up his conversation with Nikolai and fleeing, thus making impossible any developments within the interpersonal frame. Since Vera's utterances effectively stand on their own, the main value attached to her use of obscenities *сволочь\** and *паскуда*<sup>61</sup> within the film narrative is to characterise the type of family relations the Gorokhov family belongs to. Vera is thus shown to perform her role within the family, with the obscenities operating on the ideational level.

The data analysis uncovered a number of social identities performed through the use of non-standard within the six films analysed, including the local, youth, ethnic identities, etc. The following subsection will, however, focus on the three other areas. These are the social configurations/discourses that informed the largest number of instances of the character identity work that was performed through the use of non-standard:

- Family roles (11)
- Masculinity (19)
- Power (23).

Family relations that found representation in the six films under scrutiny are those between husband and wife, father and daughter, mother and son, uncle and nephew, and the brothers. In those instances when they were shown to be constructed through the use of non-standard, they mostly perform the hierarchical type of relations, with one of the interlocutors assuming

---

<sup>61</sup> scoundrel, bastard, Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 195.

dominance. In the example above, the type of family configuration rendered through Vera's use of obscenities is clearly matriarchal. Drawing on the denigrating qualities of obscene insults, she constructs her position as that of dominance, silently accepted by her husband through the act of him fleeing the scene.

At times, the role within a family becomes central to a character's identity, as in the example below:

(Pavel) Ты что, стерва\*, забыла? Забыла, что я тебе говорил?  
(Sveta) Паша..  
(Pavel) Забыла?  
(Sveta) Паша..  
(Pavel) Я же всю тебя... Твоего хахалья-недоноска говно\* заставлю жрать. Где он? Где этот козёл\*?  
(Danila) Здесь я.  
(Pavel) А, пришел, крутой. Ну что, брат, как будем бабу-то делить?

(Example 9, B)

Pavel is a minor character in the film, appearing in just two scenes. His identity is thus effectively limited to being Sveta's husband, and it is this identity that is at stake in this conversation. One of the climactic points of the film, this scene shows Pavel (husband) sorting things out with Sveta (wife) and Danila (her lover). The focus is on Sveta's adultery, which compromises Pavel's position of authority. What this verbal exchange between the members of the classic triangle shows, then, is Pavel's attempt to reclaim his authority as a husband. Linguistically, this is marked through him using non-standard addressing both his wife (*стерва*\*, *баба*) and her lover (*хахаль-недоносок*,<sup>62</sup> *говно*\* *жрать*, *крутой*). Although in the latter case Pavel's lexical choices also become operational within the interpersonal frame, informing developments in his relationship with Danila, their primary purpose is to render Pavel's performance of the husband identity. Pavel is thus positioned in relation to the social discourses on family configurations and is shown to represent the hierarchical family structure with the dominant role of a husband.

---

<sup>62</sup> a sweetheart, suitor, beau, Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 295.

The dynamics of family relations can also become the scene of an on-going conflict, signalled by repetitive reciprocal performative uses of non-standard, as is the case with Makar's relations with his uncle.

(Uncle) Куда мы так вваливаем? Меня мутит уже.

(Makar) Вваливаем работать, дядя. Человека валить. За него бабок ломанем много, купишь себе лекарства особого, раскумаришься, и ломать тебя перестанет.

(Uncle) Да ты очнись, ишак, у нас дом 89, а ты куда прёшь-то!

Давай-ка рули в этот, в рукав! Дверью хлопать не надо...

(Makar) Старый, ты [достал?] реально, хватит мне радио твоего.

(Uncle) Мы ж не знаем, куда окна выходят, урод.

(Example 10, DCM)

Relations between Makar and his Uncle are situated along the two planes: of family members and of co-workers. As co-workers, they form a team of near-equals, while within the hierarchy of family relations, the Uncle is positioned higher. In this instance, the tension between work and family statuses gets aggravated by the Uncle being in the state of hangover from the use of narcotics. Makar's comments on the fragile physical state of his Uncle contests the latter's dominant position. In this and the following utterances, both speakers employ the similar speech style, characterised by the frequent use of slang and argot (see underlined items). By adopting non-standard speech style similar to his Uncle's Makar contests the hierarchy pertaining to the relations uncle – nephew by drawing on the ingroup quality of argot and slang use. He is thus shown to perform his identity in rejection of his uncle's authority and through this redefine their relations as mostly work-related.

Masculinity. Wide range of research into gender construction undertaken in the recent decades has repeatedly shown how language can be a crucial force in constructing and reproducing gender discourses. The analysed dataset revealed 19 cases of performative use of non-standard related to the construction of characters' masculinity. These uses can in large part be linked to the patriarchal ideas of 'macho' masculinity that makes use of the non-standard's connotations of 'toughness'.

Several contexts of use can be discerned: male-female communication, ingroup fraternity interaction and male conflict. With regards to the instances of cross-gender interaction, non-standard has been predominantly used to represent masculinity construction under conditions that threaten the dominant position of the male in question. The way character can be shown to react to an indirect threat through a style shift can be seen from the example below:

(Sveta) А диски твои здесь тоже можно слушать?  
 (Danila) Можно. А плей у тебя тут какая кнопка?  
 (Sveta) Зеленая. А это что?  
 (Danila) Это Наутилусов концерт, юбилейный. Очень редкий. Я достал. Там Шевчук, Кинчев, Настя, все.  
 (Sveta) [on the phone] Да. Неет. Не могу я сегодня. Отдыхаю я, да. Я сказала – нет. Так – некогда мне с тобой базарить\*, всё, пока!  
 (Danila) Муж?  
 (Sveta) Э? Нет, это напарница просила подмениться.  
 (Danila) Козлы\*, подсунули левую\* копию какую-то.  
 (Sveta) Ты где служил?  
 (Danila) В штабе.

(Example 11, B)

Here, Danila and Sveta's amorous relation is shown to undergo several changes. At first convergent and amicable, the language of interaction changes when Sveta picks up the phone call. Allegedly from a work colleague, this conversation triggers off Danila's style shift, provoked by none the less than his wounded masculinity. Having been reminded by the phone call of Sveta's husband's unseen presence in their relations, Danila shifts into performance of macho-ist type of masculinity. Aggression and 'toughness' is rendered through use of insulting *козлы\** and argot *левый\**. Thus, even though Danila and Sveta are still portrayed as being amorous towards the end of the scene, Danila's style is affected by the behind-the-scenes conflict with the unseen competitor, that gets represented through his sudden shift into non-standard.

Similarly, masculinity can become the central issue in conflicts within fraternity relations:

(Lev) Какая сволочь\* стреляла?  
 (Kuzmich) Михалыч, держись.  
 (Lev) Пасть порву!  
 (Kuzmich) Лёва, держитесь.  
 (Lev) Да мы тонем, Михалыч, чего ты молчишь?  
 (Kuzmich) Быстрее, быстрее давай! Быстрее давай!  
 (Zhenia) Гребём.  
 (Kuzmich) Прыгай, прыгай, Михалыч!  
 (Lev) Быстрее вытаскивай меня.  
 (Kuzmich) Быстрее, быстрее.  
 (Lev) Эээх, убью.  
 (Lev) Ну и какая сволочь\* стреляла?  
 (Kuzmich) Так вам же сказали, в Глухи надо идти! А вы куда попёрлись?  
 (Lev) А это что по-твоему, абориген хренов\*?  
 (Kuzmich) Так е... вон... А это... Глухи.

(Example 12, PNH)

In this exchange, Lev is berating his friends after an accident during the hunt, when Kuzmich has fired his gun in their direction, puncturing their inflatable boat. Lev's reaction to the incident – a shift into the speech-style that employs obscene (*сволочь\**) and slang insults (*порвать насть*),<sup>63</sup> brings to fore his masculine identity. He is shown to draw on the cathartic and denigrating qualities of such lexis in order to establish himself as the dominant figure, whose rage is just and fair. Once the danger has passed, the confrontation between Lev and Kuzmich has to be solved, which is signalled by both men shifting into non-standard (cf. Lev's *сволочь\** vs. Kuzmich's *понёрлись*). Lev's aggressive masculinity is thus set against Kuzmich's claims to the knowledge power of a local. Lev is correct, though, which he confirms in his last turn with yet another insult (*абориген хренов\**) to the claimed knowledge of Kuzmich, managing to restore his dominant position within the fraternity.

Thus, both conflicts within cross-gender and fraternity frames can be represented through a shift of the masculinity-claiming character into non-standard. When it comes to the conflict between near-strangers, the contest for the dominant position becomes even more acute. This correlates with the Sattel's observation that 'the starting point for understanding masculinity lies not in its contrast with femininity, but in the asymmetric dominance and prestige which accrues to males in the society' (1983: 119), from which Kiesling has concluded that the power of men should be taken as the starting point for investigating how men construct their identities through language (Kiesling 2007: 335). Verbal exchanges within the frame of conflicting masculinity will thus revolve round the issues of power and dominance. In the analysed dataset this was represented by means of the two techniques: engaging in the conflict through constructing the contrast between standard and non-standard, and through verbal contest in the use of non-standard speech.

(Artur) Проследуем же в логово преступной группировки и осуществим захват её членов. Подчеркиваю, главарей!  
(Major) Да хоть матерей.  
(Artur) Пешочком-пешочком, майор!  
(Major) Послушай, если ты там хорошо так все знаешь, так иди ты первым заходи.  
(Artur) А кто-то из нас опытом в оперативной работе хвалился.  
(Prosecutor) Товарищи, постойте, ну погодите, вам говорю. Стойте! Если тут, возможно, начнутся какие-нибудь эксцессы, то давайте договоримся, как мы будем вести себя, если.... ну...  
*(continued on the next page)*

---

<sup>63</sup> to hit, beat, Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 155.

(Major) Остывать мы будем, если...

(Example 13, DCM)

With the three men, representing different branches of the law enforcement authorities, joining their forces to detain members of a gang, the tension between them is imminent, and masculinity is at stake. This has found representation in a variety of verbal exchanges throughout the film, of which this is one of the first. Authority and masculinity are constructed by these three characters in different manner: Artur is the youngest and the one most closely involved with the criminal underworld, hence his style is more youthful and daring. Major Alexei is the most authoritative, but also the most experienced of the lot, and he is often represented through the use of concise forthright statements, whereas Prosecutor is the least confident and is exercising his authority through standard language that draws on the legal or bureaucratic discourse. All three identity-construction methods are present in this exchange. What gets foregrounded towards the end of this exchange is the lack of confidence characteristic of the Prosecutor, brought to the viewers' attention through his suggestion to agree on the contingency plan. Although objectively speaking a sensible thing to do, this suggestion, realised through standard language drawing on the bureaucratic discourse (e.g. *экссессы*), does not fit with the masculine ideology shared by Artur and the Major, and hence the Prosecutor's timid suggestion is rebuked by the Major's highly emphatic use of argot: "We'll be dead, in the case of..." (argot *остывать*). This statement not only supplies a rather valid answer to the Prosecutor's question, but also represents the Major's performance of masculinity: in his world coming up with a contingency plan is just not what a man does.

A different approach to tackling a conflict is represented in the following exchange:

(Grigorii) Слышь, зеркала от Волги ты свинтил?

(Kolian) Какой Волги?

(Grigorii) Ты дурачка-то не валяй!

(Kolian) Какого дурачка? Где ты его увидел? В зеркале что-ли? Ты поменьше туда смотришь.

(Timokha) А то опять пропадёт.

(Grigorii) Ну, смотри. В следующий раз поймаю – ноги в жопу вобью.

(Kolian) Фильтруй базар, мужик. Как бы тебе чего не вырвали.

(Grigorii) Ну, не учёные ещё.

(Example 14, I)

This exchange was discussed above with regards to the interpersonal frame (cf. ex. 12, p.176), showing how the subordinate hierarchical position is being contested by Kolian, leader of the orphanage's adolescent community. It is, however, possible to add to it the discussion of the ideational level of this conversation, focusing on the way this verbal cross-fire represents the two men's performance of masculinity, which is especially prominent towards the end of this exchange. There, by employing a threat of physical punishment as the ultimate argument, Grigorii moves their conversation into the dimension of direct competition of masculine strength. Verbalised through obscene expression *ноги в жопу вобью*, it lays claims to superior strength, thus putting Kolian's masculinity at stake. Kolian is shown to be successfully rebuking his opponent's insult both with the lexical match (argot *фильтруй базар\**) and the reciprocal threat; however, in the last utterance Grigorii manages to rescue his masculine identity by recurring to the other type of power, knowledge power (cf. Kiesling 2007: 337). Despite the two men parting with a draw, this sequence is significant for the film narrative, as it provides the viewer with a glimpse of upcoming conflicts between the two men, as well as providing a guide to their respective personalities, for which competitiveness and authority claims serve as key elements of highly valued masculine identity.

Power roles. Although examples of masculinity construction have already been shown to draw on the notions of power and dominance, in the next few examples I would like to look more closely into the way non-standard is used to represent the performance of power roles. For this, I have selected verbal exchanges, in which one of the interlocutors is subordinated to another within the context of work relations, of which there were found 23 instances.

Within the frame of power relations, non-standard is employed for a variety of purposes. The most common is the conventional performance of power that draws on the connotations of authority and insular trade knowledge inherent in criminal argot, or the denigrating qualities of obscenities. Consider the examples below, both concerned with the hierarchical relations within mafia groups:

(Koziulski) Какая бл(ship's siren)... Я спрашиваю, какая блядь\* подменила?!

(Example 15, SM)

(Unnamed mafia boss) [to Rinat] На Москве сейчас кусок свежий есть. Будешь на Москве стоять как полный папа, в уровень со мной. Ну, а скидывать будешь, конечно. Много не попрошу тебя. Нет, не говори, не люблю пустой базар\*. Рыло есть у тебя? [to associate] Сейчас иди в кассу, открой-ка ему билет на наш рейс.

(Example 16, DCM)

In both examples non-standard is used as one of the means to convey power. This intertwines with the visual imagery, tone of voice and the speakers' accepted authority in holding the floor. Addressees in these exchanges are denied their right of turn: in the first exchange the question is rhetoric, while in the second example such denial is lexicalised overtly. The use of obscenities (*блядь\**) by Koziulski signals that his interlocutors are accountable to him. Although in this instance denied the right to respond, they have duties that Koziulski expects to be fulfilled. The rich and involving use of argot by the mafia leader in the second example (see underlined items) is important for the film narrative in the context of Rinat's earlier plan to escape this life of *братва* and *понятия* (see ex. 22, p. 157). By conducting the conversation in this argot-filled speech style and denying Rinat the right of reply, the mafia leader effectively marks the latter's subordinate position and points to the imminent failure of Rinat's earlier plans.

Although in most cases the power roles performed through non-standard are perceived, at least by the speaker in the dominant position, as legitimate, in some instances the position of power might require further legitimation, leading to construction of hybrid identities, as in the example below:

- (Racketeer) Ну что, синяки, торгуем? Часы у тебя?  
(German) У-ху.  
(Racketeer) Ну что, по полтинничку теперь. С тебя, гнида синяя, с тебя, я сказал. А ты как думал? Налоги!  
(German) Так я ж ещё ничего, я ещё ничего...  
(Racketeer) Товар конфискую.  
(German) Я ж ещё ничего не продал.  
(Racketeer) Сказал конфискую, понял?  
(German) Сынок, так я ж ещё ничего... ничего не продал ещё...  
(Racketeer) Какая разница. Сказал конфискую, и всё.

(Example 17, B)

The social conditions of outlawry characteristic of Russia of the 1990s are represented here by the character of the racketeer. Discussed above with regards to the interpersonal dimension (ex. 5, p. 170), this exchange is also marked on the ideational level. With his authority not being immediately recognized by the flea-market seller, the Racketeer is shown to be inconsistent in his further performance of power. He ends up shifting from the criminal discourse that draws on the physical threat (embodied in the posture and physique of the racketeer) and moral derogation of the opponent (realised through the use of slang and obscene insults), to the more conventional discourse of power, that of the legal tax system (e.g. *налоги*, *конфисковать*). This shifting speech style constructs a hybrid identity, which

draws on the opposite ends of the lexical spectrum, identifying the lack of solid social hierarchy, which would provide stable references and indexes.

The use of non-standard by characters shown to resist prescribed roles can emphasise the falsity and hypocrisy of social configurations, as made explicit in the following exchange:

(Head teacher) Николай Николаевич, дорогой, мне кажется, что вы как человек искусства излишне драматизируете ситуацию. Ну что страшного случилось? Не может же, в самом деле, дорогостоящее оборудование торчать в коридоре?

(Nikolai) Да вот же где оно, самое дорогостоящее оборудование! [pointing to his heart] Ну вы же педагоги, неужели вы этого не понимаете?

(Head teacher) Понимаем, для этого вас и держим. Давайте, воспитывайте, облагораживайте, истончайте души.

(Nikolai) Обратите внимание, как вы со мной разговариваете. Как с ребенком. Или как с мудаком\*.

(Head teacher) Ну что вы...

(Example 18, WP)

In this verbal exchange, the head teacher performs his power role through consistent use of standard language and the polite manner. Behind this façade, though, is total lack of sympathy towards Nikolai's plea for more concern towards the pupils' emotional and spiritual education, which surfaces in the suggestion that spiritual education is the primary function of Nikolai's work within the institution, and, having ensured his presence, is of no further concern for the administration. Powerless to effectively subvert the social configuration which subordinates Music and Arts to such subjects as Management and Marketing, Nikolai performs resistance lexically through the emphatic self-referencing use of the obscene item *мудак*. This not only conveys his frustration, but points to the overall falsity of the constructed hierarchy, where indifference is disguised by formulas of politeness and standard language.

Finally, it needs to be noted that the use of non-standard for performance of power has also found representation in the comedy genre.

(Mikhailych) Ну вы, блин, даёте! Что это было?

(Lev) Это всё медведь, гад\*! Если б ты не рычал, когда в баню лез... Мы ж думали, нам конец...

(Mikhailych) Где эта сволочь\*?

(Lev) Где эта сволочь\*?

(Kuzmich) Где...?

(Zhenia) Да вон, в траве лежит.

(Example 19, PNH)

This verbal exchange was discussed above with regards to the use of obscenities within the interpersonal frame for representation of shared experiences (cf. ex. 10, p. 146). On the ideational level, though, it is possible to discern the characters' performance of power roles, centred round the character of Mikhalych, who is presented in the film as the man of power: concise and authoritative. Lev's response to his demand for explanation shows a shift into non-standard, which renders his attempt to shift the blame (cf. the use of *зад\**) and to convey the full extent of their panic (cf. the use of *конец*). The power roles thus established confirm position of Mikhalych as the one in power and the initiator of interaction, with Lev constructing his identity as Mikhalych's wannabe right-hand man. When Mikhalych follows on with his investigation by calling the bear, addressing it with the obscene term *сволочь\**, Lev is again the first to repeat his appeal. This configuration is emphasised by Lev and Mikhalych being surrounded by three other friends all through the scene, and the comic value, of course, comes from the fact that the culprit is the bear cub, who is not going to answer them.

To sum up, non-standard language varieties can be employed in cinematic discourse to mark characters' orientation towards social configurations and discourses. Although the ideational level of identity work can be considered secondary to the interpersonal, as it is activated less frequently and only insofar as it suits the film's narrative goals, both expressive and performative functions were found to operate in a significant number of instances and across all the six films. The expressive function is employed to overtly state the character's ideational stance, while the performative represents character's engagement with social configurations on a deeper level. Performance of specific social roles, such as a husband, a man, a leader, can be central to a character's identity, and hence instances of performative use of non-standard within the frames of, for example, family, fraternity, power relations can play a crucial role in character styling. Importantly, the use of non-standard can mark both performance of assigned social roles and their subversion, while the expressive function is most often employed for wording of social critique, often having major implications for the film's macro-level message.

## Summary and discussion

This chapter applied methods of sociolinguistic analysis to the dynamic dimension of characterisation, realised through cinematic representation of identity work. Based on the sociolinguistic conception of identity as ‘in part product, in part process’ (cf. Bell and Gibson 2011), this chapter looked at the way aspects of structure and agency inform construction of character identities through the use of language variation. It was suggested that character identity work lends itself better to analysis when the distinction is made between the two levels of its operation: interpersonal and ideational.

Analysis of the interpersonal level of characterisation focused on the smallest unit of analysis – verbal exchange - and examined the way slang, argot and obscenities are employed to represent character identity construction in the course of interaction within 1) peer groups and 2) hierarchical relations. In order to enable a thorough analysis, accounting for instances of both intra- and inter-speaker variation, four strategies of non-standard language use were identified. Looking at the strategies one by one, this chapter uncovered the multiplicity of functions played by the use of slang, argot and obscenities, and thus contradicted the simplistic association of these lexical varieties solely with the representation of specific social groups. Although, as was shown in the previous chapter, stereotypes play an important role in characterisation, especially with regards to minor characters, the representation of identity work engages with the linguistic repertoire in a much more varied and nuanced manner. Returning to the issues of structure and agency, it is possible to propose that the use of lexical variation on the interpersonal level was structured primarily around the associations of these lexical varieties with familiarity, power and catharsis. Importantly, though, no direct connection between a specific variety and a structural element was revealed, as, for example, slang and argot can just as well as obscenities be used for catharsis, while the use of obscenities can also be linked to familiarity and power. Agency is thus an essential part of many instances of character styling, coming to the fore in those cases when non-standard language varieties are drawn on to defy the viewers’ expectations. The complex nature of agency is underscored by the fact that in some instances the same lexical variety was seen to be used antithetically: for example, the reciprocal use of obscenities within hierarchical relations was shown to have the capacity to represent both positive and negative charge.

The interpersonal aspect of dialogue is not, however, the only determinant of the dynamics of characterisation. Apart from orientation towards and engagement with the interlocutor, characters were shown to condition their talk in a way that would represent their attitude to

social structures and discourses. This aspect of identity work was analysed through micro-level analysis of verbal exchanges, supplemented where appropriate with macro-level analysis of character identities. Two main overarching functions that operate on the ideational level were identified: expressive and performative. Within the scope of the expressive function, non-standard language varieties are often employed to present information pivotal for the character's identity, or even the overall film message, as was shown in the example of Danila's anti-American statement in the film *Брат* (*Brother*). Metalinguistic discussions provide another way of engaging with the expressive function, representing characters' overt orientation towards social configurations indexed by non-standard language varieties. Performative function, on the other hand, does not provide explicit indication of a character's stance, but makes it discernible from the form of an utterance. The way non-standard language is used to represent the performance of social roles was analysed with regards to family, masculinity and power, demonstrating the role of slang, argot and obscenities in constructing as well as contesting and subverting hierarchies inherent in these relations.

It further needs to be noted that interpersonal and ideational aspects of identity work are not mutually exclusive, but often (albeit not always) function simultaneously at different levels. This can render cinematic representation of identity work difficult for analysis, but, having established the two levels, it enables a rejection of persistent misconceptions about linear connections between language varieties and social structures, and provides new avenues for further sociolinguistic enquiry into the characterisation values of language variation, as well as into deeper ideological underpinnings of the language used in films.

The multitude of functions fulfilled by slang, argot and obscenities, their capacity to render at times conflicting identities, as well as represent performance of both conventional and subverting roles, construct them as a versatile meaning-making resource. Considering their use within cinematic discourse first and foremost as a tool of character styling enables analysis to look beyond the customary 'fidelity check' (cf. Androutsopoulos 2012). Non-standard lexis that appears within cinematic dialogues is thus not measured against its 'authentic' counterpart, but is approached as a linguistic resource for characterisation, which is agentively selected and recontextualised to suit specific narrative goals. Unlike the issue of authenticity, what is important is that 'Linguistic character styling relies on popular perceptions of language and society: how producers and scriptwriters think, for the sake of imagined audiences, that representatives of social types are expected to speak' (ibid: 303). Cinematic representation of language variation thus derives its meanings not from the social

groups that are depicted in the film narrative, but from society at large. This is where the sociocultural account of the three lexical groups explored in this thesis, provided in Chapter 1 (3.2), needs to be revisited, in order to establish how certain aspects of non-standard lexis become a productive meaning-making resource.

*Criminal argot.* The use of the argot items to mark identities other than criminal can be linked to the socio-historical development of such lexis in the Russian milieu. Based on the loss of the cryptolectal function of argot and its ‘opening up’ into the standard language (cf. Elistratov 2007), connected to the social processes in Russian society in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some scholars, most notably Ermakova, Zemskaja & Rozina (e.g. 1999), suggested consideration of that type of non-standard lexis that pertains to the criminal world to be part of the ‘general jargon’ (*общий жаргон*). Pointing to its wide dissemination and consequential intelligibility for, and use by, the general public, this can go some way to explain why argot was found to be employed in character styling of law enforcement officers (e.g. Major in DCM, Piskunov in SM), teenagers (Kolian in I, Lenka in DCM) and even members of intelligentsia (e.g. Innokentii in SM). Moreover, the visibility of mafia in the social setup of Russia of the 1990s, has contributed to the construction of argot as the language of power and masculine strength. These associations have since found cinematic representation in the strategies of character styling, such as the attributive function of shift into non-standard, the negative charge of the mutual use of non-standard.

*Slang.* Although slang is generally conceived of as a lexis used by 14-25 year olds (cf. Uzdinskaia 1991), stylistic mixing characteristic of the early post-Soviet times has introduced many slang items into the realm of formal communication. Slang has since become widely used to mark conditions of informal communication, and has been employed for its expressive or depreciative qualities. Within the analysed dataset this has found realisation in many instances of slang use by ‘older’ characters that draw on slang’s wider connotations rather than its association with the young: for example, the forceful familiarity characteristic of Gorokhov’s slang use in communication with Nikolai (WP), use of slang to conciliate (Igor in DCM) or reconcile (Vassilii, SM). Use of slang to subvert conventional social roles, relying on its depreciative value, has found representation in, for example, Piskunov’s way of addressing Innokentii (SM) and Zhanna Arkadievna’s linguistic treatment of Grigorii (I). Expressive values of slang have further contributed to the realisation of the emphatic function of the shift into non-standard language.

*Obscenities.* The wide and varied use of obscenities for character styling can be related to the place they occupy in the Russian cultural system. Indeed, the characters whose identities

were found to be styled through the use of obscenities include such unlikely candidates as musician and intellectual Nikolai (WP), army general Mikhalych (PNH), child adoption broker Zhanna Arkadievna (I) and even some foreign characters: Nicole (WP), Jennifer and Carol (SM). Character identities thus constructed draw on both the conventional functions of obscenities (e.g. cathartic, emotive, emphatic, depreciative, distancing) and their performative qualities. Although Levin suggests that obscenities can generally be compared to performatives (cf. Levin 1986), this aspect becomes foregrounded in those instances when viewers' expectations are defied (as in the case of obscene use by foreign characters). The performative use was found to operate on both the interpersonal level (for example, to contest the established hierarchy), and on the ideational level (for example, to emphasise strong opinions or perform the power role).

It can therefore be concluded that the cinematic representation of identity work goes far beyond linear connections between language varieties and social types. Instead, as shown by this chapter, it is a complex multifaceted process, by which the meanings are drawn from more nuanced associations of non-standard language varieties. Their application is then conditioned by the interplay between the structural element: the sociocultural context of film production, which determines availability of linguistic resources and their intelligibility by the targeted audience, and the agentive element: requirements of the filmmaker's macro-level film conception and the local narrative needs.

## Conclusions

The fundamental aim of this thesis was to demonstrate how the essentialized connections between non-standard language varieties and marginalised social groups were explored, questioned and reinterpreted in the films of the early post-Soviet period. By focusing on the ways in which these language varieties contributed to identity construction, this thesis attempted to shed light on the workings of structure and agency in the meaning-making apparatus of cinematic discourse in the context of rapid language change in the studied period.

The thesis started by exploring the notion of non-standard language, arguing for the need to adopt a critical perspective. It then examined the conceptualisation of language standard in the Soviet linguistic tradition, uncovering its ideological underpinnings, and brought to attention the reliance of contemporary Russian metalinguistic debates, in both academic and lay circles, on the same tenets. This was contrasted with the recent developments in (Anglo-American) sociolinguistic research, which is drawn on in the current thesis, and the concept of speaker identity was centralised. It was proposed that under the conditions of its increased visibility in the public media, language variation should be approached in terms of its function as a communicative resource for identity. It was further suggested that this focus can also be productively extended to the study of language used in film dialogues, especially due to the overarching preoccupation of Russian cinema with the search for identity. With this in mind, six films, produced in the time of the greatest linguistic liberalisation (1991-2005), were selected and analysed.

The methodological framework proposed by this study rests on the tenet that meanings are created through the interplay between structured and agentive dimensions of language use. In order to account for both, I conducted my analysis in two parts. First, the instances of non-standard language use that drew on essentialized connections of language varieties with specific social groups were analysed. Focusing on the construction of minor characters that presupposes little or no character development and strives to achieve maximum recognition in minimum time, the analysis managed to shed light on the linguistic construction of certain social stereotypes. However, the identified stereotypes were not only conformed to, but also defied. Meanings were thus demonstrated to be derived, at times, from the refutation or even subversion of social stereotypes. The second part of the analysis looked at the use of language variation in the representation of dynamics of identity work. Two main dimensions of identity work were suggested: interpersonal, which constructs the speaker through his/her

relation to the interlocutor, and ideational, which constructs the character through his/her relation to wider social configurations and discourses. Multiple functions of the use of non-standard language were uncovered. These often drew on conventional associations, recontextualised for the local needs of specific speech situations. What can be concluded from this bifocal analysis is that structure and agency are interrelated in a variety of ways, so that the linguistic construction of stereotypes leaves room for its agentive reinterpretation, while dynamic representations bear strongly on the stable components of social structure.

Having thus provided a quick summary of the thesis, I would now like to pick up the main strands of its argument, first outlined in the Introduction, and see how they can be brought to bear on the main findings of this research. It is therefore necessary to revisit the conceptualisation of non-standard language in the Russian milieu as it constitutes the backbone of this research project, as well as determines the structural dimension of the represented language usage.

### **On the ideology of standardisation**

As was outlined in the Introduction, the process of language standardisation results in the establishment of a standard language as a 'fixed and uniform-state idealisation' (Milroy 1999: 18). Such language variety is attributed the qualities of stability and superiority, and 'is believed to be "educated" or "careful"' (Milroy 2001: 539), thus equating it with the higher prestige of its speakers. Chapter 1 further explored how socio-historic conditions of language development in the Soviet period led to the construction of a 'standard language culture' with a very rigid hierarchical conceptualisation of language. This established the association between 'literary' language and educated people. Despite the massive influx of non-standard language into the realm of public speech in the post-Soviet period, such a perception of standard language can still be discerned as the structural component informing the use of non-standard language. In films, this becomes especially evident from the linguistic construction of social stereotypes.

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, the use of non-standard language varieties is stereotypically linked to marginalised social groups, thus forging the essentialized connections that emanate from the process of standardisation and attribute the standard variety to speakers of higher prestige. Argot is then connected to criminal societies, slang to its use within youth subculture, and obscenities are represented as the linguistic index of the uneducated (most prominently, uneducated male adults). More often than not, the use of these language

varieties by outgroup members (especially by characters already established as the 'educated') is perceived as 'out of character' and, therefore, marked, adding to its value as an expressive tool.

One of the functions that draws on the marked force of non-standard language (most prominently, obscenities) is the expressive function of the ideational dimension, which contributes to the dynamics of character identity construction by making salient the character's orientation towards a social configuration or discourse. Examples of this were provided in Chapter 5 (3.1). What becomes apparent from such instances of digression from the unmarked use of standard language is that they effectively destabilise the essentialized links between non-standard language varieties and marginalised social groups. The comment made by a contract killer Uncle, appalled by his nephew's claims to the dominant position, *Это ты, мальш, разводишь, а я разговоры разговариваю* (ex. 7 p. 189), emphasises the higher status of standard language and its connection to (official) power. However, while conforming to some aspects of standard language culture, this example at the same time contradicts the axiomatic connection of standard language with the language of the educated. Similar deviation from the 'norm' is evident in the use of obscene *суки\* рваные* by a famous classical conductor in a moment of extreme rage (ex. 3, p. 187). Both orchestra conductor Innokentii and the criminal Uncle thus have a spectrum of language varieties at their disposal, and are represented as able to move between them at their will.

### **On identity styling**

This brings to the fore the role of agency in the use of non-standard language varieties. As demonstrated above, even in the case of minor characters, the essentialized links between language varieties and social groups were often found to be defied to create particular effects. Agency becomes even more salient when the dynamics of interaction is concerned. Bringing identity construction to the fore situates the discussion in the traditional realm of sociolinguistics and determines the conception of lexical variation as a stylistic resource (cf. Coupland 2007). The methodological framework of sociolinguistic analysis provides valuable tools, which help to uncover the full range of styling functions that operate within the interpersonal dimension of characterisation, including but not limited to ingroup belonging and solidarity. By examining the use of slang, argot and obscenities in the speech of various characters it was possible to demonstrate how their social identities were constructed, performed and re-negotiated. It has also enabled us to identify how the use of

non-standard lexis can be employed to modify conditions of interpersonal relations according to the speaker's goals, as was the case with the forceful familiarity of Gorokhov's use of slang in his interaction with a recently acquainted neighbour Nikolai (ex. 4, p. 141), or the sudden stylistic shift by Zhanna Arkadievna to mark the return to unequal power roles (ex. 13, p. 177).

However, the analysis has also revealed that not all instances of onscreen interaction are solely concerned with the interpersonal dimension of characterisation. Character identity styling is a multidimensional process which may also be realised through character's positioning towards wider social discourses. This can either be achieved synchronously with the negotiation of interpersonal relations, or, alternatively, can become the sole focus of a speech event. It was emphasised that often instances of the expressive use of non-standard language on the ideational level are intricately linked to the macro-level message of the film, as was the case with Danila's anti-American statement (ex. 5, p. 187). The use of non-standard language in this verbal exchange renders Danila's negative attitude to all things foreign, and styles Danila's character identity by drawing on nationalistic discourses. By making possible references to wider social discourses, the ideational level thus has the capacity to open them up for reflexive reading.

### **On film discourse as the object of sociolinguistic enquiry**

In this thesis I have thus strived to analyse, to use Bauman's words, 'the use of linguistic features in the reflexive exploration and creative manipulation of the indexical relationships between language and social identity' (2011: 713). As mentioned in the Introduction, film discourse is still a rather new and 'under-explored' (Androutsopoulos 2012: 139) field of enquiry for sociolinguistic research, and yet the body of work is growing and so is the interest towards this type of data among sociolinguists. As proclaimed by Androutsopoulos in his introduction to the special volume of *Multilingua*, 'cinematic discourse ought to figure large at the intersection [between sociolinguistics and media studies] due to its popularity as a site of sociolinguistic representation' (ibid). These words, as well as the range of contributions to the special issue of *Multilingua* signify new directions in sociolinguistic research. Accepting film dialogues as a legitimate field of enquiry, sociolinguists are now looking to develop methods which may yield new insights into the interconnections between language and society, but at the same time give due consideration to the specificity of the cinematic medium.

Looking through the contributions to this issue of *Multilingua* (2012, no. 2), I was pleased to see that many of the concerns addressed in the current thesis, have also been raised by their authors. Among them is the use of stereotypes in cinema, discussed, among others, by Bednarek, who analysed the use of deviances from the norms of politeness employed in the construction of Sheldon (*Big Bang Theory*) as a stereotypical ‘nerd’, and as such considered the stereotype to be a structural element drawn on by filmmakers to facilitate character ‘type’ recognition. Conversely, Tsiplakou & Ioannidou concern themselves with stereotypes of rural Cypriot community in terms of their deconstruction achieved in *Aigia Fuxia* through defiance of viewer expectations. Dynamics of characterisation and the agentive reinterpretation of social stereotypes were further explored in Androutsopoulos’s article on representation of sociolinguistic difference in a German film depicting the life of a Turkish-German community, discussed in Chapter 5. Similar issues were foregrounded by Petrucci, who analysed the functions of the use of African American English in the speech of characters from *Talk to me*, and their implications for translation into Brazilian Portuguese. Higgins & Furukawa, in their piece, looked at linguistic construction of cultural difference, and through analysis of stylization of Hawaiian in several Hollywood films managed to uncover the operation of orientalist discourses of ‘whiteness’ and ‘nativeness’.

Even this brief overview of the range of topics, covered by the most recent studies in sociolinguistics of cinematic discourse, demonstrates that this field of knowledge is growing rapidly, and is ripe for further exploration. Importantly, in all the studies mentioned above the application of sociolinguistic method enabled the authors to conduct both the detailed scrutiny of particular instances of film dialogue, and broader enquiry into the ideological underpinnings of the use of certain lexis in film discourse. It is precisely this bi-focal orientation that also informed the design of the current study, aligning it with the body of work described above.

## **On language and society in cinematic discourse**

Broadening the perspective on the role of language in film discourse, it is important to bring to attention the fact that cinematic representation is not only conditioned by society, but can also influence society itself. It was shown above how social discourses and configurations can be discerned through the examination of the language used in film discourse. Below I would like to outline the ways through which the language employed in films can influence society. Albeit not concerning directly the line of enquiry pursued by the current thesis, these

are the observations that in one way or another stemmed from the core research, and could be taken up as avenues for further investigation.

Cinema, as a public medium, has a very wide dissemination, and as such is a powerful means of influence on the linguistic usage of its viewers. This has been extensively researched with regards to the public use of film quotations (cf. Fischhoff et al. 2000; Savan 2005; Klinger 2008), but could also be stretched to include the use of non-standard lexis of the type researched in this thesis. As a matter of fact, during this research I have come across reviews that directly commented upon this issue with regards to the film DCM, claiming that it had introduced into the wide circulation a range of pseudo-argot items (cf. Liubarskaia 2005). Whether such items were indeed invented by the filmmaker to approximate criminal talk, or drawn from a criminal argot unknown to the reviewers is of little concern, as the model presented in the current study has accounted for the ability of cinematic discourse to stylize (cf. Coupland 2007) and recontextualise (cf. Androutsopoulos 2012) the use of non-standard lexis, thus rendering irrelevant the need to establish the ‘authenticity’ of such lexis. What matters is that such observations bring to attention the ability of films to influence their viewers’ linguistic behaviour. Easier to discern when the lexical items under scrutiny are saliently deviant from the widespread usage, it can be furthered that similar processes are in place with regards to all non-standard lexis, with popular films fostering their wider dissemination among the viewers.

Albeit an intriguing ground for research, the influence that the lexis used in popular films has on their viewers’ usage is only the most obvious of ways in which the cinema can influence viewers’ linguistic behaviour. The workings of cinematic discourse can also be much more subtle. For example, the refutation of viewer expectations with regards to certain social stereotypes that circulate in the community was shown in Chapter 4 to enable the filmmakers to foreground these stereotypes, inviting the viewer to approach them reflexively. This was most often realised by contrasting the lexical realisation of a stereotype and the visual imagery dissociated with it, presenting to the viewer a slang-speaking foreigner, argot-talking child, or swearing female. The deconstruction of social stereotypes, presented in the films, stirs up conventional social categories and questions their validity.

Finally, the fact that the language employed in the cinema is stylized, and relies on the ability of the audience to read the provided signs, implicates both the viewers and the filmmakers in the awareness of social dynamics, such as stigmatization of those social groups that are used as subjects of insulting remarks. In a piece of research that has not made it into the final version of the thesis, I have looked at the insults employed in the dataset. 253

items were identified. Although the use of obscene language is not a necessary prerequisite for an insult, whatever the means, the purpose of an insult is to degrade the subject. As Neu comments, 'putting down others via insult aims at or reflects their being lower on various scales of valuation' (2008: 170). Linguistically that implies that words commonly used as insults refer to despised, denigrating objects or behaviours: animals, lower bodily parts, excrements, promiscuity, lack of intelligence or deviations from the norms of social behaviour, thus constructing stigma (negative stereotype) as an essential component of insults. In this small study I have specifically looked at the use of insults in film dialogues, which enabled me to uncover covert stigmatization of ethnic and sexual minorities, as well as gender-based denigration. Butler's concept of historicity proved to be of particular use to evaluate the injury pertaining to the use of insults in reference to members of different social groups, as it allowed us to take into account not only instances of individual insult, but the whole history of social inequality that has marked the relations between the social groups in question. Even more importantly, it emphasised the negative impact that every single use of injurious item makes through its repetition and, through this, re-validation. As put by Eribon, 'the insult pre-existed me. It was there before I was, and it has *always-already* (as Althusser puts it so well) subjugated me to the social and sexual order that it simply expresses and recalls' (2004: 58). This, once again, foregrounds the agentive power of film to re-affirm or challenge the social dynamics reflected in language.

### **Limitation of this study and perspectives for further research**

Though I have achieved the initial aims discussed at the beginning of this thesis, my study design has unavoidably entailed certain constraints. However, the limitations that have become apparent in the course of research, have at the same time brought to my attention how the threads of enquiry, pursued in this particular study, can be extended in further research. This will be discussed in this final section.

The first and most obvious of these limitations is the restricted size of the corpus. Although for the purpose of this particular study the corpus proved to be adequate (taking into consideration the detailed linguistic focus of it, the research project would hardly be manageable otherwise), there is definitely a room for a wider perspective. This seems to be possible in two dimensions: firstly, the investigation could be extended diachronically, reapplying the method to compare data taken from films produced in different periods. Within the Russian context, it would be especially interesting to examine the social

stereotypes and dynamics of interpersonal interaction represented through non-standard language in three periods: late Soviet, early post-Soviet and the later Putin era. Such a diachronic perspective would allow for consideration of the evolution of the stereotypes, and through this the development of the structural component. Secondly, such a study could be carried out in another culture, accounting for the socio-cultural specificity of language developments of the studied period, and the conventional associations drawn on by filmmakers.

Another limitation of this study regards its linguistic focus. Although imagery and other modalities have at times been drawn on to support my argument, their interplay with the verbal component has not been investigated consistently enough, as it fell outside the narrow scope of this particular study. Conceiving of film as a multimodal medium, however, there is an increasing need to extend the model of linguistic analysis further to see how the other modalities can enhance characterisation. The articles, presented in the special issue of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* on the Sociolinguistics of Performance, go some way in addressing this issue. Bell and Gibson, in their introduction to the journal, point out that ‘Where other modalities are present, performance is always more than just language’ (2011: 566), and go on to name the main non-linguistic modalities that interplay with the linguistic performances, such as music and visual aspects, including set, personal appearance and movement (ibid).

Finally, this thesis was limited to the study of three lexical varieties: slang, argot and obscenities. Although they have indeed gained a prominent position in the public usage of the early post-Soviet era, attracting a lot of attention and causing heated debates, other non-standard language varieties can also be productively used in films for the purposes of characterisation. Within the Russian milieu, for example, regional dialects (often represented in cinema as an indiscriminate approximation of a ‘provincial’ variant), as well as non-native accents (for example, in the researched films, the use of ‘Western’ and ‘Caucasian’ non-native accents were identified) can serve as a rich meaning-making tool. It is therefore possible that further research on these deviations from standard language can provide fruitful new avenues of enquiry.

## Bibliography

- Abercrombie, N. 1991, 'The privilege of the producer', in R. Keat and N. Abercrombie (eds), *Enterprise Culture*, Routledge, London and NY.
- Agar, M. 1985, 'Institutional discourse', in *Text*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 147-168.
- Aleksandrov, Iu. K. 2001, *Ocherki Kriminal'noi Subkul'tury*, Prava cheloveka, Moscow.
- Allport, G. 1954, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
- Andersson, L. & Trudgill, P. 1990, *Bad Language*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Androutsopoulos, J. 2012, 'Repertoires, characters and scenes: sociolinguistic difference in Turkish – German comedy', *Multilingua*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 301-326.
- Austin, J.L. 1975, *How to do things with words*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Bakhtin, M.M. 1981, *The Dialogic Imagination*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Bakhtin, M.M. 1984, *Rabelais and His World*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind.
- Bakhtin, M.M. 1986, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Bauman, R. 1992, 'Performance', in R. Bauman (ed.) *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments*, Oxford University Press, New York / Oxford, pp. 41-49.
- Bauman, R. 2000, 'Language, identity, performance', in *Pragmatics*, vol. 10, pp. 1-5.
- Bauman, R. 2011, 'Commentary: Foundations in performance', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 15, no. 5, pp. 707 – 720.
- Bauman, R., Briggs, C. 1990, 'Poetics and Performance as critical perspectives on language and social life,' in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 19, pp. 59-88.
- Bears, M. 2012, 'More on Russian Identity', weblog *Bears & Vodka*, 12 April. Available online at <<http://bearsandvodka.com/?cat=167&paged=2>>. Last accessed 14.06.2012.
- Bednarek, M. 2012, 'Constructing "nerdiness": Characterisation in The Big Bang Theory', in *Multilingua*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 199-229.
- Bell, A. 1984, 'Language style as audience design', in *Language and society*, vol. 13, pp. 145-204.
- Bell, A. 1991, *The Language of News Media*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Bell, A. 2009, 'Language style as audience design', in N. Coupland, A. Jaworski, *The New Sociolinguistics Reader*, Palgrave Macmillan.

- Bell, A. and A. Gibson. 2011, 'Staging language: An introduction to the sociolinguistics of performance', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 15, no. 5, pp. 555-572.
- Benwell, B. & E. Stokoe. 2006, *Discourse and Identity*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Beregovskaia, E. M. 1996, 'Molodezhnyi sleng: formirovanie i funktsionirovanie', in *Voprosy Iazykoznaniiia*, vol. 3, pp. 32-42.
- Bernstein, B. 1971 (1990), *Class, Codes and Control*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Beumers, B. (ed.) 1999, *Russia on reels: the Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London - New York.
- Beumers, B. 1999, 'Introduction' in B. Beumers (ed.), *Russia on reels: The Russian idea in post- Soviet cinema*, I.B.Tauris Publishers, London, New York.
- Blommaert, J.M.E. 2007, 'Sociolinguistics and discourse analysis: orders of indexicality and polycentricity', in *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 115-130.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1990, 'You don't touch lettuce with your fingers: parental politeness in family discourse', *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 259-288.
- Bondaletov, V. D. 1969, 'Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie predposylki otmiraniia uslovno-professional'nyh iazykov i osnovnye zakonomernosti etogo protsessa', *Voprosy Sotsial'noi Lingvistiki*, Nauka, Leningrad.
- Bourdieu, P. 1991, *Language & Symbolic Power*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Bubel, C. 2008, 'Film audiences as overhearers' in *Journal of Pragmatics* vol. 40, pp. 55–71.
- Bucholtz, M. & Hall, K. 2005, 'Identity and interaction: a sociocultural linguistic approach', *Discourse Studies*, vol. 7, nos 4-5, pp. 585 – 614.
- Bucholtz, M. and Q. Lopez. 2011, 'Performing blackness, forming whiteness: Linguistic minstrelsy in Hollywood film', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 15, no. 5, pp. 680-706.
- Butler, J. 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, New York and London.
- Butler, J. 1997, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, Routledge, NY&London.
- Chambers, J.K. 1995, *Sociolinguistic Theory: Linguistic Variation and its Social Significance*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Clark, H.H. 1996, *Using language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Coupland, J., Coupland, N. & H. Giles. 1991, 'Formulating age: dimensions of age identity in elderly talk', *Discourse Processes*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 87 – 106.

- Coupland, N. & Garrett, P. 2010, 'Linguistic landscapes, discursive frames and metacultural performance: the case of Welsh Patagonia' in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, vol. 205.
- Coupland, N. 2001, 'Language, situation, and the relational self: theorizing dialect-style in sociolinguistics' in P. Eckert & J.R. Rickford (eds.) *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation*, CUP, Cambridge.
- Coupland, N. 2007, *Style: Language Variation and Identity*, CUP, Cambridge.
- Coupland, N. 2009 (a), 'Dialect Style, Social Class and Metacultural Performance: The Pantomime Dame', in N. Coupland and A. Jaworski, *The New Sociolinguistics Reader*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Coupland, N. 2009 (b), 'The mediated performance of vernaculars' in *Journal of English Linguistics*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 284-300.
- Coupland, N. 2010, 'Language, Ideology, Media and Social Change', in K. Junod and D. Maillat, *Performing the Self, SPELL: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, vol. 24, Narr, Tübingen. Available online at <[http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/resources/language\\_ideology\\_media.pdf](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/resources/language_ideology_media.pdf)>. Last accessed 06.12.11.
- Crothers, R. 1928, 'The construction of a play', in *The Art of Playwriting: Lectures delivered at the University of Pennsylvania on the Mask and Wig Foundation*, by Jesse Lynch Williams, Langdon Mitchell, Lord Dunsany. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
- Crowley, T. 1991, *Proper English? Readings in Language, History and Cultural Identity*, Routledge, London.
- Culpeper, J. 2001, *Language and Characterisation: People in Plays and Other Texts*, Pearson Education / Longman, Harlow.
- Deriagin, V. I. 1978, *Besedy o russkoi stilistike*, Znanie, Moscow.
- Devkin, V.D. 1984, 'O Vidah Neliteraturnosti Rechi', in Zemskaja, E.A. & Shmelev, D.N. (eds.), *Gorodskoe Prostorechie: Problemy Izuchenija*, Nauka, Moscow.
- Dondurei, D. 1998, 'Ne brat ia tebe, gnida...', in *Iskusstvo Kino*, no. 2. Available online at <<http://kinoart.ru/1998/n2-article11.html>>. Last accessed 06. 09. 2012.
- Dondurei, D. 1999, 'The State of the National Cinema' (December 1997), in Beumers, B. (ed.), *Russia on Reels: the Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London - New York.
- Dondurei, D. 2007, 'Mestobliustiteli', in Maliukova, L. (ed.), *90-e: Kino, kotoroe my poteryali*, Zebra E, Moscow.
- Dyer, R. 1998 [1979], *Stars*, London, British Film Institute.

- Dyer, R. (ed.) 1977, *Gays and Film*, BFI, London.
- Dyer, R. 1993, *The Matter of Images: Essay on Representation*, Routledge, London and NY.
- Dynel, M. 2011, 'Stranger than fiction? A few methodological notes on linguistic research in film discourse', in *Brno Studies in English*, vol. 37, no. 1, available online at <[http://www.phil.muni.cz/plonedata/wkaa/BSE/BSE 2011-37-1/BSE 2011-37-1 \(041-061\) Dynel.pdf](http://www.phil.muni.cz/plonedata/wkaa/BSE/BSE 2011-37-1/BSE 2011-37-1 (041-061) Dynel.pdf)>. Accessed 29.11.2011.
- Eckert, P. 1989, *Jocks and Burnouts: Social categories and identity in the high school*, Teachers College Press, New York and London.
- Eckert, P. 2000, *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice: The Linguistic Construction of Identity in Belten High*, Blackwell, Malden, Mass. – Oxford.
- Efimov, A.I. 1961, *Stilistika Hudozhestvennoi Rechi*, Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, Moscow.
- Elistratov, V.S. 2007, *Tolkovyi Slovar' Russkogo Slenga*, AST-PRESS, Moscow.
- Ensen, T. 2005, 'Chmo mamino', in *Iskusstvo Kino*, no. 11. Available online at <<http://kinoart.ru/2005/n11-article12.html>>. Last accessed 07.09.2012.
- Eribon, D. 2004 (1999), *Insult and the making of the gay self*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press.
- Ermakova, O.P., Zemskaja, E.A. & R.I.Rozina. 1999, *Slova, s kotorymi my vse vstrechalis': tolkovyi slovar' russkogo obschego zhargona*, Azbukovnik, Moscow.
- Fairclough, N. 1995, *Media discourse*, Edward Arnold, London.
- Faraday, G. 2000, *Revolt of the Filmmakers: the struggle for artistic autonomy and the fall of the Soviet film industry*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania.
- Filin, F.P. 1981, *Istoki i Sud'by Russkogo Literaturnogo Iazyka*, Nauka, Moscow
- Filin, F.P., Serebrennikov, B.A., Guhman, M.M., et al. (eds.) 1967, *Sovetskoe Iazykoznanie za 50 let*, Nauka, Moscow
- Finkel', AM & Bazhenov, N.M. 1960, *Kurs Sovremennogo Russkogo Literaturnogo Iazyka*, Radians'ka Shkola, Kiev.
- Fischhoff, S., Cardenas, E., Hernandez, A., Wyatt, K., Young, J., Gordon, R. 2000, *Most Popular Movie Quotes: Reflections of a People and a Culture*, WWW document, <<http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/sfischo/quotes.html>> Last accessed 26.09.2012.
- Forster, E.M. 1927, *Aspects of the Novel*, Edward Arnold, London.
- Fowler, R. 1991, *Language in the news: discourse and ideology in the press*, Routledge, London.

- Furikov, L. 1998, 'Kinorezhissura kak vid samoubiistva', in *Iskusstvo Kino*, no. 12.  
Available online at < <http://kinoart.ru/1998/n12-article22.html>>. Last accessed  
06. 09. 2012.
- Giles, H. 1973, 'Accent mobility: a model and some data', *Anthropological Linguistics*,  
vol. 15, pp. 87-105.
- Giles, H. 2009, 'The process of Communication Accommodation', in N. Coupland,  
A. Jaworski, *The New Sociolinguistics Reader*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 276-286.
- Giles, H., Coupland J. and N. Coupland. 1991, *Contexts of Accommodation: Developments  
in Applied Sociolinguistics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Goffman, E. 1971, *Relations in public*, Penguin, Harmondworth.
- Goffman, E. 1974, *Frame analysis*, Harper and Row, New York.
- Goffman, E. 1990 [1959], *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Penguin Books,  
London.
- Gorbachevich, K.S. 1971, *Izmenenie Norm Russkogo Literaturnogo Iazyka*, Prosveschenie,  
Leningrad
- Gorbachevich, K.S. 1978, *Variantnost' Slova i Iazykovaia Norma*, Prosveschenie, Leningrad.
- Gorham, M. S. 2003, *Speaking in Soviet tongues: Language culture and the politics of voice  
in revolutionary Russia*, Northern Illinois University Press.
- Gorham, M. S. 2006, 'Language Culture and National Identity in Post-Soviet Russia' in  
Lunde, I. & T.Roesen (eds.), *Landslide of the Norm: Language Culture in Post  
-Soviet Russia*, Slavica Bergensia 6, Bergen.
- Grachev, M. A. 2005, *Ot Van'ki Kaina do mafii*, Avalon / Azbuka-klassika, St. Petersburg.
- Hall, S. (ed.) 1997, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Sage  
Publications, London.
- Halliday, MAK. 1978, *Language as social semiotic*, Edward Arnold, London.
- Harris, R. 1981, *The Language Myth*, Duckworth, London.
- Hashamova, Y. 2006, 'Castrated Patriarchy, Violence, and Gender Hierarchies in  
Post-Soviet Film', in Goscilo, H. and A. Lanoux (eds.), *Gender and National  
Identity in Twentieth-century Russian culture*, Northern Illinois University Press,  
DeKalb.
- Hashamova, Y. 2007, *Pride and Panic: Russian Imagination of the West in Post-Soviet Film*,  
Intellect, Bristol, UK / Chicago, USA.
- Hatim, B. and I. Mason. 1997, *The Translator as Communicator*, Routledge, London and  
New York.

- Herman, V. 1995, *Dramatic discourse: Dialogue as interaction in plays*, Routledge, London.
- Hewstone, M. & H. Giles. 1997, 'Social Groups and Stereotypes', in N. Coupland and A. Jaworski (eds.), *Sociolinguistics: A reader and coursebook*, Macmillan Press LTD, London and NY, pp. 270-283.
- Higgin, C., Furukawa, G. 2012, 'Styling Hawai'i in Haole wood: White protagonists on a voyage of self discovery', in *Multilingua*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 177-198.
- Hutchings, S. & Vernitski, A. 2005, 'Introduction: The *ekranizatsiia* in Russian culture,' in S. Hutchings & A. Vernitski (eds.), *Russian and Soviet Film Adaptations of Literature, 1900 -2001: screening the word*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Irvine, J. T. & S. Gal. 2000, 'Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation', in P. V. Kroskrity (ed.), *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe.
- Jakobson, R. 1999 [1960], 'Linguistics and Poetics', in Jaworski, A. and N. Coupland (eds.), *The Discourse Reader*, London and NY.
- Joseph, J.E. 1987, *Eloquence and Power: the rise of language standards and standard languages*, Blackwell, New York.
- Kakorina, E.V. 2000, 'Transformatsiia leksicheskoi semantiki i sochetaemosti' in *Russkii iazyk kontsa XX stoletia (1985-1995)*, ed. E.A. Zemskaja, Iazyki Russkoi Kul'tury, Moscow.
- Keith, A. & Burridge, K. 2006, *Forbidden words: Taboo and censoring of language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Khimik, V.V. 2000, *Poetika nizkogo, ili Prostorechie kak kulturnyi fenomen*, Filologicheskii fakultet SPbGU, St Petersburg, Russia.
- Kiesling, S.F. 2007, 'Power and the language of men', in Monaghan, L., Goodman, J.E., Robinson, J.M. (eds.) *A cultural approach to interpersonal communication*, Wiley Blackwell.
- Klapp, O.E. 1962, *Heroes, Villains and Fools*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs.
- Klinger, B. 2008, 'Say it again, Sam: movie quotation, performance and masculinity', in *Particip@tions: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, available online at <[http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%202/5\\_02\\_klinger.htm](http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%202/5_02_klinger.htm)>. Last accessed 26.09.2012.
- Koester-Thoma, S. 1993, 'Standart, Substandart, Nonstandart', in *Rusistika*, vol. 2, pp. 15-31, Berlin. Available online at <<http://www.philology.ru/linguistics2/koester-93.htm>>. Accessed on 18.07.2011.

- Kostomarov, V.G. 1994, *Iazykovoï vkus epokhi: iz nabliudenii nad rechevoi praktikoi mass-media*, Pedagogika-Press, Moscow.
- Kostsinskiy, K. 1968, 'Suschestvuet li problema zhargona?' in *Voprosy literatury*, no. 5, IHL, Moscow.
- Kovalev, G.F. 2004, 'Russkie pisateli o russkom mate', in *Iazyk, Kommunikatsiia i sotsial'naia sreda*, vol. 3, Voronezh. Available online at <<http://www.philology.ru/linguistics2/kovalyov-04.htm>>. Accessed on 18.07.2011.
- Kozloff, S. 2000, *Overhearing Film Dialogue*, University of California Press, Berkeley, LA, London.
- Krongauz, M. 2008, *Russkii iazyk na grani nervnogo sryva*, Znak, Iazyki slavianskih kul'tur, Moscow.
- Krysin L.P. 1989, *Sotsiolingvisticheskie aspekty izucheniia sovremennogo russkogo iazyka*, Nauka, Moscow.
- Labov, W. 1963, *The Study of Martha's Vineyard*, MA thesis, Columbia University.
- Labov, W. 1966, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, Centre for applied linguistics, Washington DC
- Labov, W. 1972, 'The logic of nonstandard English', in P. P. Giglioli, *Language and Social Context*, Penguin, UK.
- Larsen, S. 1999, 'In search of an audience: the new Russian cinema of reconciliation', in Barker, A.M. (ed.), *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex and Society since Gorbachev*, Duke University Press, Durham & London.
- Larsen, S. 2003, 'National Identity, Cultural Authority, and the Post-Soviet Blockbuster: Nikita Mikhalkov and Aleksei Balabanov', in *Slavic Review*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 491-511.
- Lavandera, B. 1978, 'Where does the sociolinguistic variable stop?' in *Language in Society*, vol. 7, pp. 171-183.
- Law on State Language (LSL). 01. 06. 2005, Federal'nyi zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii N53-F3 o Gosudarstvennom Iazyke Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Available online at <<http://www.rg.ru/2005/06/07/yazyk-dok.html>>. Accessed on 17.07.2011.
- Lawton, A. 1992, 'Introduction: An Interpretive Survey', in A. Lawton (ed.), *The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema*, Routledge, London and NY.
- Le Page. R. and A. Tabouret-Keller. 1985, *Acts of identity: Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Levin, Iu.I. 1986, 'Ob obstsennykh vyrazheniiakh russkogo iazyka', in *Russian Linguistics*, vol. 10.

- Lippi-Green, R. 1997, *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*,
- Lippmann, W. 1922, *Public Opinion*, Macmillan, New York.
- Liubarskaia, I. 2005, 'Kakoi teper' kreativ', in *Kinoiskusstvo*, no. 9. Available online at <<http://kinoart.ru/2005/n9-article5.html>>. Last accessed 14. 06. 2012.
- Maliukova, L. (ed.) 2007, *90-e: Kino, kotoroe my poteryali*, Zebra E, Moscow.
- McInnes, P. & S. Corlett. 2012, 'Conversational identity work in everyday interaction', *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 27-38.
- Meyerhoff, M. 2006, *Introducing Sociolinguistics*, Routledge, London & New York.
- Mikhalkov, N. 1999, 'The function of a National Cinema' (May 1998), in Beumers, B. (ed.), *Russia on Reels: the Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London - New York.
- Milroy, J. & Milroy, L. 1985, *Authority in language: Investigating language prescription and standardization*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Boston and Henley.
- Milroy, J. & Milroy, L. 1997, 'Varieties and variation', in Florian Coulmas (ed.), *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Milroy, J. & Milroy, L. 1999, *Authority and Language: Investigating Standard English*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Milroy, J. 1999, 'The consequences of standardization in descriptive linguistics' in Bex, T. and Watts, R. (eds), *Standard English: The widening debate*, Routledge, London and New York. pp. 16-39.
- Milroy, J. 2001, 'Language ideologies and the consequences of standardization', in *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 530-555.
- Mokienko, V.M. 1994, 'Russkaia brannaia leksika: tsenzurnoe i netsenzurnoe', in *Rusistika*, vol. 1 / 2, Berlin.
- Montagu, A. 1967, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
- Neu, J. 2008, *Sticks and Stones: the philosophy of insults*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Nikitina, T.G. 2009, *Molodezhnyi sleng: tolkovyi slovar'*, AST-Astrel, Moscow, Russia.
- Nikolski, V. & J. Davie. 1997, *Russian-English Dictionary of Contemporary Slang: a guide to the living language of today*, Bramcote Press, Nottingham.
- Oushakine, S.A. 2007, 'Aesthetics without Law: Cinematic Bandits in Post-Soviet Space', in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol.51, no.2, pp. 357-390.

- Pagnol, M. 1983, 'The talking film', in M.L. Bandy (ed.), *Rediscovering French Film*, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- Panov, M.V. (ed.) 1968, *Russkii Iazyk i Sovetskoe Obschestvo*, vol.1, Leksika, Nauka, Moscow.
- Paulsen, M. 2009, *Hegemonic Language and Literature: Russian Metadiscourse on Language in the 1990s*, PhD Thesis, University of Bergen.
- Peshkovskii, A.M. 1959, *Izbrannye Trudy*, Gosudarstvennoe Nauchno- pedagogicheskoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Prosvescheniia RSFSR, Moscow
- Petrucci, P. 2012, 'The translation of cinematic discourse and the question of character equivalence in Talk to me', in *Multilingua*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 231-251.
- Plutser-Sarno, A. 2005, *Bolshoi Slovar' Mata*, vol. 1, Limbus-Press, Moscow - St. Petersburg.
- Prokhorova, E. 2003, 'Can the meeting place be changed? Crime and Identity Discourse in Russian Television Series of the 1990s', in *Slavic Review*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 512-524.
- Quaglio, P. 2008, 'Television dialogue and natural conversation: Linguistic similarities and functional differences', in Ädel, A. and R. Reppen (eds.) *Corpora and Discourse: The challenges of different settings*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam / Philadelphia.
- Quaglio, P. 2009, *Television dialogue: The sitcom Friends vs. Natural Conversation*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam / Philadelphia.
- Queen, R. 2004, 'Du hast jar keene Ahnung': African American English dubbed into German', in *Journal of Sociolinguistic*, vol. 8, no. 4., pp. 515-537.
- Rampton, B. 2006, *Language in late modernity: Interaction in an urban school*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Rampton, B. 2009, 'Interaction ritual and not just artful performance in crossing and stylization', in *Language in Society*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 149-176.
- Remael, A. 2004, 'A place for film dialogue analysis in subtitling courses' in P. Orero (ed.) *Topics in Audiovisual Translation*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam / Philadelphia.
- Richardson, K. 2010, *Television dramatic dialogue: A sociolinguistic study*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Rothbart, M., Dawes, R. and Park, B. 1984, 'Stereotyping and Sampling Biases in Intergroup Perception', in Eiser, J.R. (ed.), *Attitudinal Judgment*, Springer Verlag, New York.
- Ryazanova-Clarke, L. 2006, 'The Crystallization of Structures": Linguistic Culture in Putin's Russia', in Lunde, I. & T. Roesen (eds.), *Landslide of the Norm: Language Culture in Post-Soviet Russia*, Slavica Bergensia 6, Bergen.

- Sattel, J. 1983, 'Men, inexpressiveness and power', in Thorne, B., Kramarae, C. and N. Henly (eds.), *Language, Gender and Society*, Newbury House, Cambridge, MA.
- Savan, L. 2005, *Slam Dunks and No-Brainers: Language in Your Life, the Media, Business, Politics, and, Like, Whatever*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Schiffman, H. 1996, *Linguistic culture and language policy*, London and NY, Routledge.
- Selianov, S. 1999, 'Cinema and Life' in B. Beumers (ed.), *Russia on reels: The Russian idea in post- Soviet cinema*, I.B.Tauris Publishers, London, New York.
- Shepotinnik, P. 1992, 'With Perestroika, without Tarkovsky', in Lawton, A. (ed.), *The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema*, Routledge, London and NY.
- Shlyakhov, V. and E. Adler. 1995, *Dictionary of Russian Slang and Colloquial Expressions*, Barron's, New York.
- Shlyakhov, V. and E. Adler. 2006, *Dictionary of Russian Slang and Colloquial Expressions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Barron's, New York.
- Shmelev, D.N. 1977, *Russkii iazyk v ego funktsionalnykh raznovidnostiakh*, Nauka, Moscow.
- Short, M. 1989, 'Discourse analysis and the analysis of drama', in R. Carter, P. Simpson (eds.), *Language, Discourse and Literature*, Unwin Hyman Ltd.
- Silverstein, M. 2003, 'Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life', *Language and Communication*, vol. 23, pp. 193-229.
- Silverstein, M. 1976. 'Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description,' in Basso & Selby (eds.), *Meaning and Anthropology*, New York: Harper & Row.
- Skvortsov, L.I. 1964, 'Ob Otsenkah Iazyka Molodezhi: Zhargon i Iazykovaia Politika', in *Voprosy Kul'tury Rechi*, vol. 5, Institut Russkogo Iazyka AN SSSR.
- Sokolov, V. 2004, 'From Guns to Briefcases: the Evolution of Russian Organized Crime', in *World Policy Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 68-74. Available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40209904?seq=1>>. Last accessed 24.05.2012.
- Swann, J, Deumert, A, Lillis, T, Mesthrie, R. (eds.) 2004, *A dictionary of Sociolinguistics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh
- Taylor, T.J. and J.E. Joseph (eds.) 1990, *Ideologies of language*, Routledge, London.
- Thakerar, J.N., Giles, H. and J. Cheshire. 1982, 'Psychological and linguistic parameters of speech accommodation theory', in Fraser, C. and K.R. Scherer (eds.), *Advances in the Social Psychology of Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Trudgill, P. 2000, *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to language and society*, Penguin books, London.

- Tsiplakou, S., Ioannidou, E. 2012, 'Stylizing stylization: The case of Aigia Fuxia', in *Multilingua*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 277-299.
- Ushakov, D.N. (ed.) 1935-40, *Tolkovyĭ slovar' russkogo iazyka*, OGIZ, Moscow.
- Uzdinskaia, E. V. 1991, 'Semanticheskoe svoeobrazie sovremennogo molodezhnogo zhargona', in L. I. Barannikova (ed.), *Aktivnye protsessy v iazyke i rechi*, Saratov.
- Vanoye, Francis (1985) 'Conversations publiques', in Francis Vanoye (ed) *La parole au cinéma / Speech in Film*, special issue of *Iris* 3(1): 99-118.
- Vernitski, A. 2005, 'Post-Soviet film adaptations of the Russian classics: Tradition and innovation', in Hutchings, S. & A. Vernitski (eds.), *Russian and Soviet Film Adaptations of Literature, 1900-2001: screening the word*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Vinogradov, V.V. 1955, 'Literaturnyi Iazyk i Iazyk Khudozhestvennoi Literatury', *Voprosy Iazykoznaniiia*, vol. 4.
- Vinogradov, V.V. 1963, *Stilistika. Teoriia poeticheskoi rechi. Poetika*. Moscow.
- Vinogradov, V.V. 1967, *Problemy Literaturnykh Iazykov i Zakonomernosti ih Obrazovaniia i Razvitiia*, Nauka, Moscow.
- Vinokur, G.O. 2006 (1929), *Kul'tura Iazyka*, KomKniga, Moscow.
- Vinokur, T.G. 1968, 'Ob izuchenii funktsional'nykh stilei russkogo iazyka sovetskoi epohi' in *Razvitie Funktsional'nykh Stilei Sovremennogo Russkogo Iazyka*, Nauka, Moscow.
- Wierzbicka, A. 2002, 'Russian cultural scripts: the theory of cultural scripts and its applications', *Ethos*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 401-432
- Zemskaja, E.A. (ed.) 1973, *Russkaia Razgovornaja Rech*, Nauka, Moscow
- Zemskaja, EA (ed.) 2000, *Russkii iazyk kontsa XX stoletia (1985-1995)*, Iazyki Russkoi Kul'tury, Moscow.
- Zhel'vis, V.I. 1997, *Pole Brani: Skvernoslovie kak sotsial'naia problema*, Lodomir, Moscow.
- Zvereva, V. 2009, "'Iazyk padonkaff': Diskussii pol'zovatelei Runeta', in Lunde, I. & M. Paulsen (eds.), *From Poets to Padonki: Linguistic authority and norm negotiation in modern Russian culture*, Slavica Bergensia, Bergen, Norway

## Filmography

*Брат* (Brother) 1997, dir. A. Balabanov, Kinokompaniya CTB / Gorky Film Studio, Russia.

*Итальянец* (The Italian) 2005, dir. A. Kravchuk, Lenfilm Studio / Tulos Cinema, Russia.

*Мама не горюй* (Don't Cry Mommy) 1997, dir. M. Pezhemsky, Kinokompaniya CTB, Russia.

*Окно в Париж* (Window to Paris) 1993, dir. Yu. Mamin, La Sept Cinéma / Fontaine Sarl, Russia and France.

*Особенности Национальной Охоты* (Peculiarities of the National Hunt) 1995, dir. A. Rogozhkin, Lenfilm Studio, Russia.

*Ширли-Мырли* (Shirli-Myrli) 1995, dir. V. Menshov, Mosfilm, Russia.

## Appendix 1: List of minor characters (Chapter 4)

### Film 1: *Окно в Париж* (WP), 1993

- WP1 - Ivan Kuzmich (Nikolai's neighbour): obscenities.
- WP2 - Unnamed young neighbour: obscenities.
- WP3 - Fedor (Nikolai's neighbour): obscenities.
- WP4 - Vera Gorokhova (Nikolai's neighbour, Gorokhov's wife): obscenities.
- WP5 - Unnamed musician (a Russian émigré living in Paris): obscenities, slang.
- WP6 - Unnamed taxi-driver: obscenities.
- WP7 - Unnamed policeman: obscenities.
- WP8 - Unnamed female passenger on the bus: obscenities.

### Film 2: *Особенности Национальной Охоты* (PNH), 1995

- PNH1 - Black man: slang.
- PNH2 - Detainee: obscenities.

### Film 3: *Ширли-Мырли* (SM), 1995

- SM1 - Bronia (diamond field developer): obscenities.
- SM2 - Sukhodrishev (detainee): obscenities, argot.
- SM3 - Jennifer (wife of the US Ambassador): obscenities.
- SM4 - Alexei (Koziulski's right-hand man): obscenities, argot.

### Film 4: *Брат* (B), 1997

- B1 - Unnamed director of 'Nautilus' music video: obscenities.
- B2 - Kruglyi (mafia boss): argot.
- B3 - Zinka: obscenities.
- B4 - Zinka's father: obscenities.
- B5 - Kruglyi's associate: obscenities, argot.
- B6 - Kat: slang.
- B7 - Pavel Evgrafovich (Sveta's husband): obscenities.
- B8 - Utiug (thug): obscenities, argot.
- B9 - Unnamed thug (Utiug's gang-mate): obscenities, argot.

### Film 5: *Мама Не Горюй* (DCM), 1997

- DCM1 - Misha (night club owner): argot.
- DCM2 - Lena's mother: argot.
- DCM3 - Makar: obscenities, argot, slang.
- DCM4 - Makar's Uncle: argot, slang.
- DCM5 - Ksiusha: obscenities.
- DCM6 - Igor: slang.
- DCM7 - Zhorzhik (is being detained): slang.
- DCM8 - Gitler (is being detained): obscenities.
- DCM9 - Sailor (is supposed to be detained): slang.
- DCM10 - Zubek (is being detained): obscenities, argot.
- DCM11 - Unnamed mafia boss: argot.

DCM12 - Tourist's (mafia leader) associate: argot.

**Film 6: Итальянец (I), 2005**

- I1 - Anton: slang.
- I2 - Group of unnamed orphan teenagers: slang, argot, obscenities.
- I3 - Timokha: slang, argot.
- I4 - Mandrykin (passenger on the train): slang.
- I5 - Stray boys at the train station: slang, obscenities.
- I6 - Group of unnamed youth playing guitar: slang, obscenities.

## Appendix 2: Glossary of common non-standard lexical items (Chapters 4 & 5)

**Translation of slang, argot and obscene items that occur in the analysed examples more than once:**

*Бабки* - pl. money (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 6)

*Базар* - gassing, yakking, chatting, talk (Nikolski & Davie 1997: 6)

*Базарить* – to quarrel, argue; to talk, converse (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 6)

*Баян* - hypodermic syringe (Nikolski & Davie 1997: 8)

*Блядь* - slut, whore; exclamation of extreme annoyance (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 14)

*Гад* - (lit. a reptile, snake) a repellent, disgusting person; bastard, scoundrel (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 35)

*Говно* - (lit. feces, excrement) shit (Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 57)

*Жопа* - buttocks, behind, rear end (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 66)

*Глаз на жопу натянуть* - (lit. to pull someone's eye over his ass) to punish severely (Shlyakhov & Adler 2006: 190)

*Ноги в жопу вобью* - lit. will hammer your legs into your ass.

*Задница* - buttocks; ass (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 72-73)

*Задницу не лизать* - cf. not to be an apple-polisher, ass-licker (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 66)

*Идти в задницу* - go to hell, the hell with you (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 73)

*Козёл* - (lit. he-goat) swine, bastard, scumbag (Nikolski & Davie 1997: 49).

*Кумарить* – to have a hangover from the use of narcotics (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 103)

*Левый* - bogus, fake, illegal (Nikolski & Davie 1997: 57)

*Мент* - pig, cop, copper (Nikolski & Davie 1997: 63)

*Мудак* - stupid git (Nikolski & Davie 1997: 66)

*Сволочь* – (used as a term of abuse) scum, swine (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 176)

*Стерва* - a nasty or worthless woman (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 191)

*Сука* - (lit. she-dog) a term of abuse or reproach, used of both men and women (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 194)

*Хер* – a penis (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 224)

*На хер* – to hell with it (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 230)

*Охереть* – to become worn out, bored (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 142)

*Хрен* – (lit. horseradish) a penis (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 226)

*Хрен ли тебе надо* - cf. what the hell do you need

*Хреновый* – bad, poor (Shlyakhov & Adler 1995: 227)