Social Context and Semantic Feature: The Russian Pronominal Usage

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Friedrich himself sums up neatly the interest of pronominal usage: "Just two short words, operating in all speech events that involve two interlocutors, signaled the relative position of each pole in hundreds of dyadic relationships." There is good precedent for use of a historical-philological approach in anthropology, but its application to a major literary tradition may seem unusual. Literature, however, is well established as a source for analysis of address (see Metcalf 1938; Brown and Ford 1961), and Friedrich makes clear the value of nineteenth-century novels in particular. Not only are they rich in indications of common usage but they also bear witness to dynamics of use and implicit meanings. Friedrich points to a conscious awareness in Russian society of extralinguistic signaling as sharing the same dimensions as pronouns, for example, the seduced girl whose eyes say ty while her words are vy (in Tolstoy's Resurrection). Here, as so often where the two conflict, the nonlinguistic modality overrides the linguistic (see the concluding remarks on "latent ty"). And, Friedrich suggests, use of such data, by grappling with inner as well as overt speech, may enable one better to understand personal strategies and to anticipate linguistic change (cf. Howell 1968).

The pronouns are linked with other sets of terms which would have to be taken into account in a complete study of address. Pronominal selection is therefore merely a special case of the type of sociolinguistic selection discussed by Ervin-Tripp (Chapter 7), Blom and Gumperz (Chapter 14), and Passin (1966). As Friedrich points out, however, focus on pronouns is nevertheless specially advantageous. They are as frequent, easily noted, obligatory categories linking grammar with social categories. Here in address, he suggests, may be a surer connection of grammar with culture than in attempts to link grammar with world view.

Ten components serve to indicate the features necessary to account for the Russian usage: social context (setting, scenes); characteristics of participants, i.e., age, generation, sex, genealogical distance, relative authority, group membership; the tone (or key) underlying a relationship or brought to expression in it (principally solidarity but also, later, sarcasm and irony); topic of discourse; and language variety itself, i.e., dialect. The same discriminations underlie the symbolism of kinship terminology and, one may suspect, the other forms of sociolinguistic choice and switching within the society. Friedrich suggests that some six to a dozen such components may be found to underlie all such systems; he implies that further research might establish such a limited set of dimensions or universals for sociolinguistic symbolism (social meanings) generally (see Buchler and Freeze 1966). The present dimensions meet the test of accounting for nearly all the Russian evidence and of predicting the usage in new texts.

Notice that the discriminations are made with regard to the social situation and relationship with which the pronouns are used. The two pronouns themselves are dialectic directly of social distance (its presence or absence, or greater or lesser degree). Whether the absence of social distance signaled by ty is affectionate or contemptuous, whether the presence of social distance signaled
by vy is respectful or rejecting, emerges from the interaction between the meaning of the pronoun and the meanings of pronouns in the twin contexts of previous discourse and present event (including, as noted, facial and paralinguistic accompaniment).

The Russian usage is presented first from the standpoint of patterns of exchange within dyadic relationships rather than, as with the Koya in the preceding chapter, from the standpoint of rules for a given speaker. (But notice that to specify interlocutors, or their relevant characteristics, in the context to which rules are sensitive, can accomplish the same thing). After symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns for both vy and ty are described, Friederich turns to the dynamics of what he felicitously calls a stable though not static system. Having observed earlier that context may determine usage, but that usage may also define context, he presents several instances of pronoun “switching” and “breakthrough,” including temporary and persistent deviance, and covert attitudes. Paralinguistic signaling aside, the pronoun system itself provides for an expressive counterpoint within relationships.

This and the preceding chapter complement each other, each broaching an essential aspect of research into rules of use. Both are concerned with the social context of linguistic forms, the one to bring it within the scope of formal rules, the other to interpret the texture of use as well. Additional related readings are provided by Conklin (1962), Friedrich (1964, 1966), Goodenough (1965b), Hymes (1964c), Hymes (typescript), Jain (1969), Martin (1964), and Nuestupný (1968).

Introduction

Studies in the relation between language and culture have sometimes focused on how a way of life is categorized through words. The results are often of enormous value, as in the case of a dictionary of contextual definitions. But lexicographical inventories typically lack theoretical explication.

A second kind of study may focus on the connections between obligatory grammatical categories in the linguistic system and axiomatic distinctions in the abstract thought of a people. Controlled demonstrations are sometimes possible, and the conclusions may be intellectually challenging, but one often finds on closer inspection that the causal relationships are little more than suggested or asseverated (Jakobson 1959:142–43).

In short, language and culture studies tend to oscillate between comparatively descriptive correlations of “words and things” and comparatively tenuous correlations between grammar and metaphysics. Just as fruitful as the lexicographic and philosophical extremes have been the attempts to relate either speech behavior or the inferred linguistic structure to either the societal regularities or the patterns of a culture. In what follows I shall attempt to demonstrate how speech usage is determined by cultural principles. More concretely, I shall try to show how second person pronouns were selected and understood in nineteenth century Russia. To do this I will first evaluate the evidence for pronominal usage. Then I will show how pronominal usage covaried with genealogical distance, emotional solidarity, and eight other variables. The patterns governing the three types of symmetrical and asymmetrical usage of the pronoun will be considered in detail, leading directly to five cases of pronominal switching and what I call “breakthrough,” notably in Crime and Punishment. A final section deals with the expressive and latent functions of the pronoun ty. The conclusions concern the relative advantages and disadvantages of this kind of semantic analysis.

Background

The evidence on the society and culture of the Russia of the last century happens to be excellent, largely due to three brilliant magna opera of one to two volumes each, composed by three very different men: a German baron and economist (von Haxthausen), a French sociologist and man of letters (Leroy-Beaulieu), and a peripatetic Scotch journalist (Wallace). Their picture is rounded out by other sociological, ethnographic, and bellettristic articles and books written over the past hundred years.

The information on pronouns is similarly full. But first a historical note. Until about 1700 only ty had been employed, whereas “. . . the French manner of address to one person in the plural number appeared in eighteenth century and rapidly became current among educated circles” (Iaschenko 1960:414). By the Napoleonic era French was already a passport to high society. The use of Russian vy as a formal and respectful singular had become firmly established and launched on its independent

1 “Society” in this slightly technical sense refers to the regularities that may be observed, measured, or otherwise determined as relating the individuals and groups of some bounded population. “Culture,” on the other hand, refers to the structured set of historically derived explicit and implicit norms, values, attitudes, feelings, and ideas that are shared and transmitted by the members of a society.

2 References for Russian literature cited are appended at the end of this chapter.
course, although subsequently reinforced and subtly influenced by the pervasive French bilingualism of the upper classes and their constant exposure to the tu/vous system of French novels and plays.

The Russian realistic novel gives full and balanced evidence on pronominal usage. For example, Tolstoy depicts the high aristocracy, Dostoevsky, the patterns of the intermediate urban classes. Gorky unfolds a panorama of proletarian and artisan customs, Leskov covers the clergy, and Zlatovratsky and Sholokhov provide truly ethnographic detail on the peasants and Cossacks, respectively. All authors—particularly Tolstoy and Dostoevsky—include contacts between persons of diverse background; their status conflicts and rapidly fluctuating emotions are often symbolized through pronominal usage, which, needless to say, is one of the serious losses in any English translation. The Russian novel was realistic, not only in its concern with status differences, with burning moral issues, and with human nature but because it referred to the culture of the readers themselves, or to that of groups such as the peasantry which they had come to know through personal experience; ethnographic accuracy was an aesthetic imperative. In the Russian novel and any similar text the pronouns are both frequent and very free in their distribution; in my sample of over eight thousand pages the pronoun must at least be implied every time a verb refers to an addressee. Pronouns belong to what linguists of the Prague School call “background phenomena,” and cannot be artificially employed any more than any other grammatical paradigm; no matter how original his wording or syntax, a creative writer must use the obligatory, covert categories of language and culture in conformity with the generally held norms. The figures in Gogol and Chekhov, for all their uniqueness, do not jar the reader in their use of pronouns qua pronouns. In fact, the originality of a protagonist cannot be evaluated without reference to the larger context of cultural norms and values.

The second person pronouns functioned, not in isolation, but interrelated with other sets, notably kinship terms, proper names, official ranks, words reflecting occupation, relative age, and similar categories. Numerous kinship terms of address and many other quasi-kinship terms such as kum (ritual co-parent) were frequent in conversation, particularly among the peasants. All classes of Russians interjected “brother,” “little mother,” and other terms when consciously or subconsciously trying to create an informal, congenial atmosphere with non-relatives. And there were numerous combinations of proper names, ranging from nicknames, to diminutives, to the first name alone, to the first name plus a fixed epithet (“Mikhail the Wolf”), to the name plus an informal or formal patronymic (Ivanich as against Ivanovich), and so on up the line. These means of address had to be calibrated with each other. For example, “Aren’t you joking, Foma?” “In the first place, I am not your . . . but your, and don’t forget it; and not Foma, but Foma Fomich” (Dostoevsky, Stepanchikovo Village, 472). Finally, all the terms of address coverted with the partly independent and equally copious terms of reference. The total number of combinations was astronomical. Gogol was literally correct when he wrote facetiously in Dead Souls (35–36):

It should be said that if we in Russia have not yet caught up with the foreigners in some things, we have long overtaken them in the means of address. It is impossible to count all the shades and niceties of our means of address. The Frenchman or the German will never grasp or understand all the particularities and differences; with almost the same voice and language he will start to speak with a millionaire, and with a petty tobacco vendor although, of course, in his soul he is appropriately base to the first. It is not like that with us. Among us there are wise fellows who will speak altogether differently with a landlord having two hundred serfs than with one who has three hundred, and with one who has three hundred they will not speak as they would with one having five hundred, and with one having five hundred, again, not as with one having eight hundred; in a word, although you go to a million, they will always find shades of difference.

Second person pronouns have been analyzed from various points of view. Social psychologists have shown how pronominal usage is connected with attitudes and behavior (Brown and Gilman 1960). Philologists have produced accurate and carefully documented histories of the usage in German, French, and other languages (e.g., Fay 1918–20). Linguists such as Jespersen have inferred the distinctive attributes shared by pronouns, such as their degree of abstraction and freedom of distribution. In fact, the second person pronouns are of singular theoretical interest because they link the abstract properties of a basic grammatical paradigm to a second matrix of culturally specific components that are both very frequent and of major emotional and social significance. In other words, pronominal usage affords us an analytically accessible link between the obligatory categories of grammar and a second domain of obligatory semantic categories related to the social culture: second person pronouns occupy a boundary zone between “deep grammar” and the deep levels of attitude and norm by which a society is organized. For this reason their study may emerge as a comparatively fruitful ground, a felicitous case, for explorations of the hypotheses advanced by von Humboldt, Boas, Whorf, Sapir, and others.

As Gerald Kelly has pointed out in a personal communication, this contrasts with the United States, where much of the literature functions to inform the reader, to create expectations of usage and behavior in subcultures not known through personal experience. The critical notion of “realism” is hardly adequate as a cover term for the Russian novel. In the present context, suffice it to say—that the literature did provide a wealth of insight into society and character.

Norman McQuown has been emphasizing the sociolinguistic significance of substitutes for several years. I have profited from several discussions with him on this subject. Otherwise, I retain hope but extreme skepticism about demonstrating any pervasive causal relation between social structure and grammatical patterns (e.g., Russian aspect), à la
Discriminations Underlying Pronominal Usage

Cultural systems are roughly of two kinds: those which are explicit and understood by the native speaker, as against those primarily inferred and understood by the analyst. It is true that most Russians occasionally would have to hesitate or reflect over their usage and that exceptionally sophisticated persons such as Leo Tolstoy were largely aware of the basic determinants. But in general it seems that the discriminations underlying pronominal usage were unconscious and were not conceptualized as a system by the Russian. This was even more true of the evaluation which had to intervene between the discriminations and one's pronominal response, and between one's hearing of a pronoun and one's classification of the speaker's discriminations. Such evaluation was largely subconscious. In sum, what follows is a system that has been inferred by one analyst.

The ten components symbolized by Russian pronominal usage were: the topic of discourse, the context of the speech event, then age, generation, sex, and kinship status, then dialect, group membership, and relative jural and political authority, and, finally, emotional solidarity—the sympathy and antipathy between the two speakers.

First, two discriminations are implied by all acts of speech. The speaker had mentally to associate the selection of pronouns with the topic of discourse; two officers might exchange vy while discussing military tactics, but revert to ty when chatting about women back in their quarters. A large number of such culturally defined topics—kinship, former school experiences—tended to suggest informality, whereas business and professional affairs and certain lofty (torzhestvennje) themes would encourage one to select vy. Of course, many subjects were relatively neutral and did not predispose the speaker in any particular direction.

Pronominal usage was also determined by the context, especially the social context of the speech event; an august judge would use vy to a tramp during proceedings in court. The social context and the topic of discourse were logically related and are often hard to separate analytically.

Nonetheless, instances of clearly independent variation are not too hard to find; a daughter might use vy when talking to her mother about a boy during a masked ball, but revert to ty when whispering about the same boy later in her mother's bedroom.

Next come four discriminations that are "biological" in a sense, although defined in terms of the culture. Relative age within the same generation was not too important, but could tip the scales between distant blood relatives, or in cases where relative authority and affection led to ambiguity. Relative generation, on the other hand, was frequently decisive, as in the automatic asymmetry between any two gentrifying relatives separated by one or more generations. Relative sex could also decide usage in the sense that two speakers of the same sex were normally more prone to use familiar terms, whereas speakers of the opposite sex would exercise greater restraint. Finally, genealogical distance, of which all Russians were keenly aware, provided highly specific rules and many general ones, such as that siblings of the same age at all social levels reciprocated ty. Age, generation, sex and genealogical distance were also important components underlying the use of Russian kinship terms.

The third set of discriminations includes various social and group phenomena. To begin with, relative authority depended on differences in the distribution of rights and obligations; for example, the father or house chief held many economic and legal rights, whereas the position of the son could be largely defined through his obligations in this patriarchal culture. Such jural relationships, since they involved individual statuses, could and often did vary independently of group membership. In other cases, the relative authority had to be backed by the ability or readiness of the individual to exercise the raw power available. Relative authority often represented the resolution of conflict between several sets of dimensions—above all, between the formal authority of the bureaucracy as against the local leadership and political values of the peasants and Cossacks. Clearly, relative authority and other discriminations had many more specific jural and political implications.

Group membership subsumed, above all, the notion of household; for instance, cousins or affines of about the same age would exchange ty if they were residing in the same household but would not necessarily do so if they were living widely separated. The prestige of a family name also influenced pronominal usage among the gentry. Village membership could be decisive for the peasants, as in the regions where the elders addressed each other informally but used vy to elders from other villages. Finally, class or caste membership determined usage; workers, peasants, and Cossacks of about the same age normally employed ty even at the outset of a conversation, whereas two gentrymen would have to begin with vy.

Dialect refers to grammatical and semantic patterns marking a particular variety of Russian. Dialect lines were not clear among many merchant
families and members of other transitional classes, but thick bundles of isoglosses did distinguish the gentry from the workers, Cossaks and peasants; all of the latter lived in what amounted to a quasi-familial ty universe. The comparative homogeneity of the lower classes, while not congruous with the many divergences in their way of life, did reflect their constant interaction and the recency of their differentiation. The independence of dialect as a variable was demonstrated neatly when, for example, a bilingual, blue-blooded aristocrat became so inured to vy that he used it even to peasant children, although receiving ty from their parents (Tolstoy 1960a Resurrection:218-20).

Finally, there is the psychological dimension of “solidarity,” of emotional affinity or antipathy. Emotional distance and certain negative feelings went together with the formal pronoun. Contrariwise, close friends, lovers, and persons joined in some common purpose toward first use ty, and vy in some contexts could symbolize the dislike or depreciation bred of familiarity. In brief, the correlation between pronouns and solidarity was complicated, and difficult to predict in terms of a simple continuum between the ty of “like-mindedness” (Brown and Gilman 1960) and the vy of weak solidarity.

The foregoing summary suggests the conclusion that pronominal usage implied complex concatenations of discriminations that reinforced each other often enough to make speech predictable. The rough breakdown of the society inferred from such usage is congruous with the sociological map arrived at by external criteria. In a larger, cross-cultural sense, the ten components inferred for Russian probably underlie most usage in other languages where second person pronouns are differentiated by authority and solidarity; they may be as universal for pronominal usage as Kroeber’s nine components have turned out to be for kinship nomenclature (Kroeber 1909).

Let us now turn to the types of dyadic relationship, beginning with the symmetrical use of vy.

The Dyadic Pairs: The Symmetrical Vy

Vy was mandatory in certain unambiguously formal occasions. Thus, older peasants of probity and worth (blagomysliennye) would exchange the formal pronoun when meeting on the street after Sunday mass, and peasant parents and matchmakers would tend to the same usage during the formalities of negotiation and the wedding. But such obligatory reciprocation was largely confined to non-peasants. For example, all participants used the formal pronoun in a large category of public occasions in the cities, such as a parliamentary meeting, a court session, university examinations, or, for that matter, an open, public altercation between a factory manager and leaders of the workers (Gorki 1946, Mother:134). A special poignancy could be created when, for example, former comrades-in-arms or drinking partners switched to formal terms during the challenge and execution of a duel (Lermontov 1948, A Hero of Our Time:192-210). While usage was thus dictated by context, the process of feedback common to all communication also meant that the usage itself might symbolize an august and ceremonial atmosphere (torzhestvennost’). By the same token, obligatory usage could create peculiar stresses or types of ambiguity when the speaker was conversing with a close friend. In such cases, vy might signal the artificiality of the social distance being maintained.

In the second place, vy was reciprocated between any two persons desiring to show respect or deference, regardless of their relative status. While such personal motivation was secondary or redundant to many socially determined usages, it also functioned independently in other cases where asymmetrical or even informal usage might have been expected, or at least permitted. Thus, at one point a student and a policeman offer to help a young woman, very drunk, who has apparently been violated or mistreated and is stumbling through the streets (Dostoievsy 1951, Crime and Punishment:57); their sympathy and pity is partly conveyed by vy. In another case, a Russian officer and a surgeon of German background decide to room together in a resort town in the Caucasus. They become confidants and good friends. Their elective affinity—to translate Goethe’s precise phrase—is congruous with a continued reciprocation of an affectionate but respectful vy.

The role of pronominal signals for the individual’s self-image is brought out in the following exchange between a proud young worker and an arrogant officer who is leading a search party (Gorki 1946:127). The officer begins with:

"This is ty, Andrew Nakhodka."
"I," answered Nicholas, moving forward. Andrew stretched out his hand, took Nicholas by the shoulder, and thrust him backwards.
"He made a mistake! I am Andrew!"
The officer, raising his hand and threatening Vesovshchik with his finger, said:
"You look out with me!"
He began to dig in his papers.
"Nakhodka, were ty ever brought before an inquiry on political grounds?" he asked.
"I was summoned in Rostov, and in Saratov . . . only there the policeman said vy to me."

¹ In both cases, there would be a greater use of the name plus patronymic (poimenovat’ po otechestve; Zlatovrasky 1947:153).
The officer winked his right eye, wiped it and, baring his small teeth, began to say: 

"But isn't it known to vy, Nakhodka, precisely to vy, just who are the rascals who are distributing criminal proclamations in the factory, aah?"

Here we see a factory worker insisting—with admittedly ambiguous success—that an inspecting officer show him the proper personal respect.

This and other cases in my data point to important discriminations not covered by my system: those of sarcasm and irony. Under certain circumstances the opposite of the expected usage could confuse, humiliate, or affront an addressee. Such inverse usage was especially devastating before a group of people who were more aware even than the victim of the disparity between the verbal symbolism and the underlying social realities. This is illustrated by a passage from the twentieth chapter of Tolstoy's 'Childhood.'

Grandmother had a singular gift of expressing her opinion about people under certain circumstances by using the plural and singular pronouns of the second person together with a certain tone of voice. She used vy and ty contrary to general custom, and on her lips these shades of meaning acquired an entirely different significance. When a young prince walked up to her she said a few words calling him vy and looked at him with an expression of such contempt that if I had been in his place I would have become utterly confused.

(An ancient countess would normally use ty to a young prince.) In contrast to sarcasm, humor does not appear to have been significantly related to pronominal usage.

We have discussed formal occasions and the particular needs to show or receive deference. Vy, in the third place, was determined by a large set of contexts that can be defined exclusively through the relative status of the participants within the larger context of the society. The higher the individual in the social system, the more he tended to both receive and use vy with persons of lower standing, including lackeys. Such usage to almost all except one's siblings and spouse was largely a carry-over from the patterns of the French high aristocracy, probably the most formal in Europe. Such bilingual blue-bloods lived in what approximated a vy-universe.8

Relative status within the larger society was also symbolized by automatic formality on first encounter or casual acquaintance between all officials and gentryfolk who were not lovers, close friends, or certain types of kinsmen. In one novel a petty official reciprocates vy with a long series of rustic landlords with whom he is often cordial or even pseudo-intimate (Gogol 1947, Dead Souls:102-103). Russian officers and non-coms usually stayed on formal terms, just as did gentryfolk with the tutors and governesses of their children, and also prison officials with political prisoners of the educated classes. Moving yet further down the ladder, a wealthy peasant would normally exchange vy with older peasants in the village he was visiting (Zlatovratsky 1947, The Foundations:459), and elders from neighboring villages might do the same under certain circumstances. In all the instances just discussed, we find formality between persons who do not know each other well and whose social status was felt to be significantly coordinate.

Among the gentry, at least, the formal pronoun was enjoined between certain categories of actual and potential relatives, such as a man and the consanguines of a girl he was wooing (Dostoevsky 1951:218), and between cousins who were strangers, and between parents-in-law and their children-in-law. Man and woman held to vy during a formal courtship until entering upon marriage, or sexual relations, or some comparably intense experience. Women tended to use vy more than men, among the gentry because of their greater concern for propriety, among all classes because of their partially subordinate status. In one intriguing case that cuts across class lines, two women held to the formal term while they passed through three relative statuses: landlord’s niece as against the same landlord’s maid, a provincial actress as against the landlord’s concubine, and finally, a broken prostitute as against the village wanton. The persisting use of vy despite considerable emotional affinity and, toward the end, approximately equal power, lends unique flavor to this evolving bond (Saltykov-Shchedrin 1958, The Golovlyov Family:265, 289)—social status proving dominant over both personal feelings and the general situation.

The Asymmetrical Relationship

In the patriarchal society of Russia deference and obedience were widely accorded to age. Among the gentry, a child would reciprocate ry with the mother until about school age, but older children and adolescents used the formal pronoun to their parents. These patterns did not hold for some aristocratic families, and there may well have been marked differences between parents, with less formality toward the mother, particularly between mother and daughter. Similarly asymmetrical were the ties between married daughters and either parent, and between such distant consanguines as a man and his cousin’s son’s wife (Aksakov 1958, A Family Chronicle:82, 157, 188). Step-relatives and affines separated by one or more generations were also on vy/ty terms. Two concrete ex-

8 Roger Brown, writing in 1960, reported a French aristocrat who could remember using tu only to an old woman who had been his nurse (Brown and Gilman 1960:270).
amples must suffice for genealogical distance. In one case, an adult prince received ty from an aunt thirty years his senior, although both were exchanging the French vous. In another, singular instance, an elderly landlord and his niece retained the asymmetrical terms even after he had become a psychotic and disreputable miser and she had returned home from a career as an actress and prostitute, broken through drink and tuberculosis (Saltykov-Shchedrin 1958:181, 267). At one point the miser even suggests that his niece become his mistress. Among the gentry and wealthier merchant classes, then, usage was necessarily asymmetrical between relatives of any sort, including those by adoption, who were separated by one or more generations.

Among peasants and Cossacks asymmetrical usage was occasional or regional, but was not generally obligatory between the household head and his younger house-mate, with one major exception: in most of the larger households of the urban lower classes and of the peasants of the central "industrial" zones, the household head normally received vy and addressed all as ty; these were precisely the two social groups and the geographical area where Great Russian patriarchy reached its acme, and where the influence of the vy-using gentry was most deeply felt. Asymmetrical usage also set off a peasant from his parents-in-law, particularly a girl from her father-in-law. In sum, asymmetrical usage tended to emerge between two peasants when they were separated by two or more dimensions, such as generation, community, extreme authority, or the solemnity of the situation.

Superior and inferior authority within the established officialdom was pronominally symbolized in the relation between a teacher and pupils, law officers and criminal prisoners, and officers or non-commissioned officers with their soldiers; the last of these three usages was congruous also with the gentry or middle class origin of almost all officers, as against the proletarian or peasant background of almost all soldiers. The Cossaks, despite their strong egalitarianism, reflected their common experience as members of a military caste by scrupulously using vy to non-coms, officers, gentryfolk, and all government officials.

One well-known short-story of Pushkin's illustrates how pronouns could symbolize authority. A young hussar feigns illness while en route in order to seduce the adolescent daughter of a fifty-year-old stationmaster and war veteran. The brokenhearted father makes his way into the large house in the capital where his daughter is being kept as a mistress, but, during a final, climactic scene, is literally thrown out by the irate young aristocrat.

Neither man ever deviates from asymmetrical usage. Thus, a low-ranking official could be subordinate to any member of the high aristocracy. The frequency with which social differences over-stood age demonstrates the strength of class cleavage in the first part of the century.

Perhaps of greater psychological interest than the school, prison, army, and officialdom were the domains such as the gentry household and the landed estate where asymmetry was enjoined and often automatically ascribed for the members of an entire group. Any patriarch or matriarch with the abilities and motivation to realize his or her power would eventually use ty to all, and receive vy from all except the spouse (Saltykov-Shchedrin 1958:6, 15, 71), and sometimes even from the spouse; such gentry patterns emphasizing the formal or secular aspect of the father's or husband's authority, became models for the peasant and lower class households mentioned above. As a rule, landlords and their estate managers were on vy/ty terms, although both kinds of symmetrical relationship might occur for personal reasons. Country squires usually remained on a vy/ty basis with their peasant concubines, although genuine affection and isolation could lead to a mutual ty within the rustic privacy of the home.

Pronominal usage between peasants and other classes entailed surprises. For example, a wealthy, respectable, and urbanized serf in Moscow would still use vy and receive ty from the dissolute and disgraced son of his distant proprietor, ascribed status taking precedent over both age and actual power. In a second case, a fully mature huntsman and house serf would be pronominally subordinate to the little son of his landlord. A third instance comes from the Childhood of Tolstoy, always so sensitive to status. As a boy he was cared for by a beloved elderly peasant woman who, incidentally, was on vy/ty terms with his mother. At one point this nurse scolded him, saying, “Don't ty soil the tablecloth.” Little Tolstoy gets furious and exclaims, “How... Natal'ja is saying ty to me...” at which she apologizes with, “That's enough, daddy [Bat'ushka], con't vy cry...” at which he is comforted. Here a small boy is literally calling an elderly woman into line on her usage.

Other, obvious differences in social rather than administrative status could determine usage. With the exceptions already noted, all persons used ty to small children and would use ty and expect vy with pre-adolescent children. Any member of the gentry tended to use ty to a lower-class servant, typically the valet, or lackey, or the waiter in a tavern. The strength of the combination of age and class differences is shown by a gentleman-landlord and his peasant boarder, who automatically entered upon an asymmetrical relationship and held to it even when the youth was demanding the return of a large sum that the old codger had borrowed and squandered (Zlatovratsky 1947:288, 350). Ty was used downwards to the members of minority groups whose poverty and ethnic status were clear,

9 One of the first acts of the Provisional Government in 1917 was to force all commissioned officers to use vy to privates, but the Red Army reintroduced ty, eventually extending it to all subordinates.
as between a middle-aged landlord and a Jewish watchman (Dostoevsky 1951:544–45). Any person with education and with civil or military rank would immediately enter into vy/ty terms with some irregular semi-legal person, such as a professional thief, a gypsy, a beggar, or a criminal. In sum, asymmetrical relationships were automatic when social differences were wide and mutually felt.

**The Symmetrical Ty**

Within and between all social classes children under about age eleven or twelve exchanged ty. In one delightful scene, an aloof, isolated, and already psychotic eight-year-old is approached by three adventurous, arrow-shooting little “Mohicans” who are also on vacation, and immediately begin using ty (Sologub 1961, In Bondage:241–243). The apparent assumption was that children were essentially equal and potentially solidary. The status of child overwhelmed or obscured that of class. Childhood informality also created the frequent comradeship between the offspring of peasants and landlords, and contributed to the peculiar nostalgia for an irretrievable past that was felt by so many of the gentry in their adult years.10

Second, the informal pronoun was exchanged with certain non-humans, such as God, the Devil, demons, and other objects, animals, spirits, and essences that might be addressed; the folklore and the texts containing fantasy show that the usage was returned. The conversations between Gorki’s grandmother and God reveal the intimacy of such relations with non-humans and the supernatural.

In the third place, all members of the lower classes strongly tended to reciprocate ty, even among total strangers. In one case, a proletarian woman exchanges the informal pronoun with an elder peasant from another community, whereas her son and the same man are on formal terms. In a second instance, a wealthy kulak and his impoverished body servant express through ty their sense of common peasant origin and their personal affinity (Zlatovratsky 1947:520). In some northern, northeastern, and Siberian regions, lacking landlords and far from the urban centers, ty was probably the only functional pronoun.11

Membership in the same community was often decisive. Thus relations—irrespective of age—were mutually informal between proletarian

neighbors in the squalid factory towns. The villages of Cossaks and Great Russian peasants were pronominal in-groups of a sort, the members conceiving of each other as relatives and addressing even the village elder informally. In one revealing case, the peasants in a small commune start on formal terms with a young visiting Muscovite, but after they have ascertained his friendship with a local son their whole attitude and their pronominal usage shift, as is summed up by one matron, “So ty, my dear (kinsman), are on friendly terms with him” (Zlatovratsky 1947:153).

Until the middle of the century, peasants usually said ty to the landlord, but not to his wife; this was part of their tendency toward informality but, in a perhaps more important sense, it symbolized their conceptual grouping of persons of supreme authority: the landlord’s rights over his serfs included purchase and marital arrangements. With the partial exception noted above, the household chief, the landlord, Tsar, and God were all addressed with ty and the quasi-kinship term, batushka (“little father”). Thus a striking feature of authority in Russia as against the West was that vy generally did symbolize greater power, but that when the greatness passed a certain point the speaker switched back to what might be called the ty of total subordination or of an intimacy that could not be jeopardized.12 From another point of view, ty to God, Tsar, and squire emphasized the fatherly aspect of their jural authority.

In addition to the social categories just discussed, pan-Russian patterns enjoined a mutual ty between brothers and sisters. This was related to the norms of cooperation and loyalty between brothers and, in addition, was extended to many kinds of comrades and associates. Peasants, Cossaks, and artisans banded together into brotherhoods, and there was considerable overlap both in sentiment and usage between the words for commune (mir) and cooperative (artel’). In addition, ritual brotherhood, sealed by exchanging crosses worn around the neck, was important at all levels. Students, officers, and other members of the educated classes had a ritual of “drinking to ty,” but this foreign bruderschaft appears to have been rare in the last century and is not evidenced in my texts. In any case, fraternal solidarity of many kinds was a pervasive and integrating theme in Russian culture and was partly symbolized by the reciprocal ty.

The informal pronoun was usual between spouses at all social levels, as would be congruous with the balance of rights between man and woman that underlay the symbols of male dominance. In many merchant families and lower-middle class families, however, the wives addressed their husbands with vy plus the name and patronymic. Among the bilingual gentry

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10 It is psychologically intriguing that the ty was primarily associated with infant experiences and, for the aristocracy, was a symbol of intimate personal identity; in psychiatric terms, it may correspond to the so-called “ego-id” (Silverberg 1940:511).

11 I am indebted to Howard Aronson for this point.

12 As Julian Pitt-Rivers points out, total subordination implies intimacy whereas formal social usage implies social distance which obtains where respect might conceivably be denied.
the mutual informality ran counter to pressures toward a reciprocal \textit{vy} on the model of French.\textsuperscript{13} And conjugal usage could be poignantly ambiguous, as when estranged or even hostile spouses persisted with \textit{ty}. Even among the high aristocracy, lovers held to informal terms long after the liaison had cooled (Lermontov 1948:141).

Aside from siblings and spouses, \textit{ty} was reciprocated between more distantkinsmen under certain conditions; for example, gentryfolk cousins who knew each other reasonably well would be on informal terms. Second degree relatives through marriage, such as the spouse’s siblings or the sibling’s spouses, would usually reciprocate \textit{ty} with a speaker of about the same age, although this could produce conflicts if they were personally antipathetic; in one case, a man and his sister’s husband “tried to use \textit{ty}” after the sister’s marriage, “but remained on \textit{vy} terms” (Tolstoy 1960a:332). In general, usage between affines varied considerably. As a final point, the growth of the individual at all social levels was critically affected by the grandmother, who was both a nurse, and a storyteller, and a repository of norms and traditions; she varied from the peasant babushka of Gorki’s \textit{Childhood} to the august and matriarchal babushka of Leo Tolstoy. Throughout life most Russians remained on informal terms with at least one grandmother, although among the high aristocracy she might be addressed with \textit{vy} while a peasant nurse filled many of the more intimate and homely roles.

The informal pronoun was also reciprocated between members of the gentry who had been joined through shared experiences, such as regular participation in card games or a common revolutionary ideology. Classmates from the same secondary school and alumni of the same privileged school, such as the Corps of Pages, were formally linked by \textit{ty}. As a rule, men who had moved in the same circles as university students would continue with \textit{ty} throughout life, although reunion with an old chum might entail conflicts and pronominal gaucherie. In one case, a prince and an old army comrade use \textit{ty} although the former is embarrassed by the implied closeness he no longer feels (Tolstoy 1960a:245–246).\textsuperscript{14} The informal usage between friends and students generally expressed a certain affection or \textit{esprit de corps}, but at a more profound level it was the felt extension of a kinship bond just as, conversely, the use of \textit{vy} within the peasant village—which was an extended kinship group—was often associated with the introduction of external standards by government bureaucrats.

\textsuperscript{13} Indeed, one of the most fascinating problems, barely hinted at in this chapter, was the degree of congruity between French and Russian usage; both languages functioned as largely independent systems for classifying the same set of actual and potential addressees.

\textsuperscript{14} This contrasts with many other languages, such as German, where the \textit{Du} to a former classmate is clearly not felt to necessarily imply anything more than the former group membership.

\textit{The Dynamics of Pronominal Usage: Eight Cases of “Switching” and “Breakthrough”}

Crucial to linguistics and social anthropology is the distinction between studies of synchronic systems as they presumably operate in the mind of speakers during at least one generation, as against the study of historical sequences and cultural evolution. But despite the value of keeping the two approaches apart to some extent, they can be rigidly separated only at great cost to our understanding. This is because the second or “diachronic” framework always sheds light on the synchronic system; by following replacement, loss, and rearrangement through time the dynamic relations of units can be inferred. In addition to historical and evolutionary change, any synchronic system shows alternation, variation, and various kinds of rapid and often erratic option which can lead to inferences about the functional and hierarchical relations between elements. Let us review eight extended cases of pronominal “switching” and “breakthrough” with the end of indicating and illustrating some of the more obvious dynamic relationships.

**COMRADESHP BETWEEN PECHORIN AND MAXIM MAXIMYCH IN LERMONTOV’S A HERO OF OUR TIME**

An arrogant, aristocratic lieutenant and a grizzled, older captain find themselves thrust together as the only officers on an isolated outpost in the Caucasus. Reciprocal formality at first seems appropriate to both. But while the latter is sitting on the young lieutenant’s bed and discussing a confidential matter he switches to \textit{ty}. When the lieutenant appears to suggest insubordination, however, the captain reverts to \textit{vy} as he issues a peremptory demand; for the older man, the power of military rank is in delicate balance with the emotions uniting the two lonely comrades in the Caucasus.

In the following scenes the lieutenant uses \textit{vy} at all times, partly because he is almost thirty years younger, partly because he comes from the high aristocracy, partly because, as is borne out by several episodes, he is emotionally incapable of warm, positive attachments to other people; as is so often the case, the relative power of the three determinants cannot be ascertained. On the other hand, I would deduce that in some contexts the young lieutenant would have used \textit{ty} or that at least after their separation the older man thought of him as employing the more in-
timate pronoun. During the final scene the two friends accidentally meet again at an inn. The affectionate and simple-hearted captain rushes forward impulsively, but is countered with, “How delighted I am, dear Maxim Maximych! Well, how are vy?” (Lermontov 1948:88).

“But... ty... vy?” muttered the old man with tears in his eyes.”

The wrenching quality of the passage turns on the binary and here ironic choice between two pronouns.

CHICHIKOV AND KOROBOCHKA
IN GOGOL’S DEAD SOULS

Chichikov, a well-bred, petty official, gets lost at night in a snow storm, and finally knocks on the door of the unknown proprietress of a small estate. Both he and the maid at first use ty, reflecting their mutual surprise and the spontaneity of the situation. But after hearing a few words, she switches her pronouns, apparently in reaction to his urban accent: “But who are vy?”

Later that night Chichikov and the proprietress reciprocate vy as they converse over tea, although repeatedly interjecting the kinship terms, matushka (derived from “mother”), and batjushka. The proprietress switches to the informal ty when expressing sympathy over his carriage accident, and when bidding him goodnight she calls him not only batjushka but literally “my father” (moy otets), and tenderly offers to scratch his heels, a soporific comfort her deceased husband had habitually required (1947:34). By this time both Chichikov and his hostess feel themselves to be approximately on a par.

The following day finds our guest, who is about forty, addressing his hostess in familiar terms; because of her seemingly small estate, “he didn’t stand at all on ceremony.” He soon inquires after her last name, and is told, “Korobochka (the wife of) a collegiate secretary,” and that, on further inquiry, her name and patronymic is Nastas’ja Petrovna. The official title impresses Chichikov, and from then on he is careful to address her respectfully. He begins to importune her to sell him the title of such of her serfs as have passed away since the last census. As soon as this extraordinary intention becomes clear, Korobochna switches from vy to ty. By this time (pp. 37–42) the asymmetrical relationship is coming to symbolize their mutual and increasingly clear-cut awareness that she is an established owner of serfs and land, a true pomeschchitsa, whereas he is materializing into a rather suspicious sort of solicitor. The function of ty as an expression of Korobochna’s growing wariness comes out in several strongly felt utterances: “What are they (the dead souls) to ty?” or “Are ty deceiving me, batjushka?” or “What terrible things ty say!” The unequal quality of the relationship is underscored by his combination of vy plus Nastas’ja Petrovna, whereas she mentions no proper name at all (partly because he had dodged her original question about it). But both continue to interlard kinship terms.

Chichikov finally persuades Korobochna to sell her dead souls by implying that he is taking government contracts and may be in a position to buy some of her vegetables. In the last scene, after a rich dinner for the “contractor,” she switches to vy when asking if he will buy some pork lard, but then goes right back to ty when discussing his carriage and road conditions (p. 41).

In ten of the most masterful pages in Dead Souls the dyadic relationship evolves from vy/ty, to ty/vy to vy/vy to ty/ty to vy/vy, and finally to vy/ty. This illustrates the frequency and rapidity of pronominal switching as total strangers adjusted to each other. More particularly, it illustrates the complexity of covariation between pronouns and various sorts of “kinship terms.” Thus, ty plus a kinship term of address occurred quite normally among the gentry. But less redundant and more interesting was the conjunction of the formal pronoun with a kinship term such as matjushka, enabling the speaker such as Chichikov to partially cross the gap between himself and his interlocutor.

A PROLETARIAN MOTHER, HER SON, AND HER SON’S FRIENDS
(GORKI’S MOTHER)

After the death of her brutal husband, a mother somewhere in her fortiess is left with an adolescent son who soon turns to private study and underground revolutionary activities. More and more books appear on his shelves and, to signal his growing cultivation, “... he said vy to her and called her mamasha, but sometimes, suddenly, he would address her tenderly:

“Ty, mother, please don’t worry. I will be coming home late...”

(Gorki 1946:113). And later:

“He said ‘mother’ and ‘ty’ to her, as was his wont only when he drew closer to her...”

About the time of the conversations just described, the son brings home a worker about twenty-eight years old to live with the family. At first the mother calls him vy plus the respectful name plus patronymic (Andrey Anisimovich), plus the respectful and affectionate kinship term that literally means “dear little father” (batjushka). But they grow more intimate as the weeks pass, as is clear from the following scene.

“Dandrusha, you ought to mend your shoes, or you will catch cold.” To which he responds, “You are almost like a true mother to me” (a, mozhets, vy i est’ rodnaia mat’ moja). They remain on a formal basis, while exchanging the “kinship terms,” batjushka and nenka. But after the young
friend confesses to the murder of a political informer (pp. 166, 168), the mother switches to *ty* although he continues with *vv*. At this point her son actually comments on the pronominal usage:

"'Ty know, ty did well, that *ty* began to say 'ty' to him after that.' She looked at him with surprise and said, 'Yes, but I didn't even notice how it happened! He has become so close to me—I can't say how!'"

The mother's relations to her son's other revolutionary friends were generally formal, even in the case of women, such as her son's sweetheart, whom she got to know rather well. She remained on formal terms with an educated school teacher though living in her house, and emotionally very close (p. 247). The main exception to such reciprocal formality was the relationship between the mother and a young revolutionary in his thirties before the hour of his death, when she becomes a loving nurse to him and he is a hero to her (p. 201). But I hasten to add that even in such critical relations between two proletarians fused by a common ideology, one could not predict a switch to *ty* with absolute certainty.

THE PRINCE AND THE PROSTITUTE IN RESURRECTION

The heroine of Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection* (1960a) was born the daughter of a wandering gypsy and the village wanton. She was then adopted and reared in the cultivated home of an elderly, aristocratic lady. When the eighteen-year-old nephew of her patroness comes home from school on vacation, he unselfconsciously starts out using *ty*. She responds with the respectful *vv* (p. 47), except when he steals a kiss from her during a game, and even then her *vot tebe raz* is part of a fairly frozen, exclamatory expression. The contrast between their asymmetrical address comes out neatly when he is leaving for the university and they bid farewell: *Proshchaj, Katiusha*, as against, *Proshchajte, Dmitrij Ivanovich*. During their first, idyllic acquaintance their usage reflects caste status more or less as one would predict.

Three years later the prince returns as a pleasure-seeking officer. She still uses *vv* (p. 54), whereas he vacillates before finally settling on the same form. Both the young people are soon in love, but continue on formal terms; when they meet after the moving Easter service their usage is apparently reinforced by the solemnity of the occasion (p. 60). But a few hours later on the same Sunday he switches to *ty* while trying to embrace her in a corridor, and this is conjoined with the diminutive of her first name. She sticks to *vv* and the congruously respectful first name plus patronymic, as above. During the physical seduction that evening he repeatedly says *ty*, whereas she says *vv* while her eyes say *ty*, "I am yours (*tvoja*)"; the physical conquest of a woman appears to have been insepa-

rably connected with a switch to *ty*, at least by the man; the woman might use *vv*, while her gestures, intonation and so forth indicated that she was thinking and feeling *ty*.

Twelve years later the same prince finds himself in the juror’s box and asked to pass judgment on an attractive, young prostitute who has been accused of poisoning and robbing a client. He recognizes her as the village girl he seduced long ago. Feeling remorse about his role in precipitating her downfall, he visits her later in jail. As he begins to speak (p. 195) he uses *ty*, possibly in recognition of the enormous social distance between them, possibly to express his impulsive love toward her. But following an interruption in the conversation, he reverts to *vv* as part of the desire to increase the propriety of their relationship.

Soon afterwards he returns to the jail and declares his resolve to marry her. At this her instant reaction is to recall the degrading scene the morning after the seduction when he tried to thrust one hundred rubles into her hand. With a sort of ironic reference she therefore erupts with: "There is your (*tvoja*) price."

"I won't leave *tebja*!" For a brief period thereafter she reiterates a *ty* of anger and contempt: "*Ty* are a prince . . . (*ty*) go away!" (pp. 173–74). But after a second, brief interruption by the warden she returns to *vv* although the prince continues with *ty*, as in, "*Ty* don't believe me."

As the interview draws to a close both interlocutors grow colder, and he finally switches back to *vv* himself, saying, "*Vv* think it over." Here we see the pronoun functioning as a sort of exclamatory particle, a two-phoneme signal of rapid emotional shifts.

Shortly afterwards, Kat'ja is convicted. When the ill-matched couple meet again they at first reciprocate *vv*, but when he proposes to her for the second time, it is with, "I am asking *tebja* to marry me." She rejects him using the formal pronoun, and he almost immediately switches back to *vv* himself. Eight pages later, when he dreams of her, she says, "I am a female convict, but *vv* are a prince."

Later the prince returns from St. Petersburg after an unsuccessful attempt to appeal her sentence. He is chagrined to learn that she has been accused of gratifying one of the sergeants and, as a result, has been fired from an advantageous job in the prison hospital. During the ensuing dialogue he feels ambivalent, and Kat'ja is mortified. Both use *vv* and they never deviate from it for the rest of the story, during their long trek to Siberia (pp. 357, 406), nor at their last meeting (p. 453), when her moral redemption has been largely achieved through the influence of the political prisoners, to one of whom, a psychotic terrorist, she is already promised in marriage.

The particular value of the *Resurrection* lies in the interaction between persons from opposite ends of the social continuum. In Prague School
terms, at either end of the continuum one of the two pronouns was un-
marked, while the second was marked and conveyed more precise in-
formation. Thus, for a prince vy was the more frequent and the less marked
pronoun, whereas for a prostitute ty was comparatively unmarked; in
either case a switch to or a maintenance of the marked pronoun implied
special hostility, affection, or ambivalence.¹⁵

RASKOLNIKOV AND SON’JA IN
CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Raskolnikov, an undernourished and idealistic student in his early
twenties, is obsessed with the theoretical implications of willfully
breaking a fundamental moral law. He is living in a small garret that
adjoins a room filled with two half-crazed parents and their hungry children.
One daughter, a shy, nervous girl of about eighteen, has turned as incon-
spicuously as possible to prostitution in order to help support her impov-
erished but originally upper-class family.

These two young people reciprocate vy during their casual first con-
tacts. But after his brutal ax-murder of the old usurer and her niece,
Raskolnikov is torn by guilt and needs a confidant. He goes to visit the girl
in her lodgings. As the conversation develops, they increasingly sense
their need for each other. His voice becomes “quiet and tender.” But
Son’ja remains formal while talking about the suffering of her family, and
even her first professional experiences; once she affixes the hyperre-
spectful particle -/sl. As they continue to draw closer, Raskolnikov real-
izes with more terrible clarity the conflict between her degrading profes-
sion and her innocent, generous nature. He falls to his knees and kisses
her feet (nogi). Son’ja cries out, “What are vy doing?” (precisely: chto vy,
chto vy eto! Peredo mnou!), and Raskolnikov immediately arises and
answers, “I did not bow down to ty, I bowed down to all human suffering”
(Dostojevsky 1951:343). This scene, deservedly one of the most re-
nowned in all Russian literature, owes its drama in no small measure to the
profound, kaleidoscopic reorganization within Raskolnikov’s mind; Son’ja
is elevated to a vast symbol, an abstract, metaphysical idea, and
her shift in status is signaled at the critical moment by a switch in pro-

ouns.

But let us continue. The asymmetrical relationship is held during a
subsequent discussion and while Son’ja is reading the story of Lazarus:
“... I am the resurrection and the life...” and then “... the stub
was already burning low in the candleholder, murkyly lighting up in a
beggarly room the murderer and the prostitute who had been strangely

¹⁵ I am grateful to Milka Ivić for this point.

united through a reading of the Holy Book” (p. 350). Raskolnikov,
realizing that Son’ja is also half insane, asks her to go with him “along
the same road,” and announces that he has chosen to tell her who murdered
the niece of the usurer. Son’ja, terrified by his wild-eyed conduct, and
not understanding his motives, persists with vy, and so they part.

Shortly afterwards, in a humiliating scene, Son’ja is accused of theft,
and stoutly defended by Raskolnikov. He again visits her lodgings, and
they start out reciprocating vy. Their relationship soon grows very tense
as Raskolnikov poses a terrible if hypothetical moral question, and Son’ja
breaks down, sobbing and appealing to Providence: “... did you indeed
come only to torture?” at which Raskolnikov, feeling a burst of remorse,
switches his pronouns, while answering, “But of course ty are right,
Son’ja” (a ved’ ty prava). His voice “weakens” and his entire manner
alters as he confesses that he has come to ask her forgiveness. They sit
together on her bed and he gradually begins his confession, at first by
giving her hints and asking her to guess. (At one point she fleecingly
reminds him of the murdered niece.) Son’ja finally gets his message, that
he himself was the ax-murderer, and recoils in horror, and then throws
herself to her knees before him and cries out, “V’y, what have vy done
to yourself!” (chto vy, chto vy eto nad soboy sdelali). Raskolnikov responds
with, “How strange you are!” (strannaja kakaja ty). It is at this critical
juncture that Son’ja at last switches her pronouns, “No, there is no one in
the entire world more unhappy than ty” (p. 439); (net, net tebja nes-
chastnee nikogo v tselom tsvete), and she immediately repeats ty in sev-
eral sentences while venting her own compassion, and pleading her
willingness to follow him anywhere. Son’ja’s pronoun switch, just like
her kneeling, exactly parallels the earlier scene, and is reminiscent of the
eruption of tu at the most climactic moments in Phedre and other plays of
Racine.

After her rush of commiseration, however, Son’ja thinks of the murder,
of the fact that Raskolnikov has bludgeoned her friend, the niece of the
usurer. She pulls away, and also switches back to vy, “Yes, but what are
vy (p. 440; Da kak vy, vy takaj). Raskolnikov then explains that he may
have killed in order to steal, at which Son’ja’s love comes flooding back,
with a switch to ty, “Ty were hungry. Ty ... in order to help your
mother...” But when he denies this, Son’ja, again horrified, reverts
back to vy: “... how do vy give away your last money, but kill ... ?”
At this point Raskolnikov is torn between his growing affinity and sympa-
thy for Son’ja and his desperate need to be frank about his own cynicism
and immorality. He becomes agonized, wonders out loud why he has
come to confess at all, and exclams that they are two very different (roz-
nyje) people. Here Son’ja, again seeming to sense his loneliness and des-
pair, switches back to the pronoun of intimacy with “(Ty) speak, speak!”
This exhortation precipitates Raskolnikov into his theory of the Napoleonic hero; would Napoleon have murdered in defiance of the moral law? Son’ja, confused and irritated, switches back again to the formal pronoun, “Vy better speak to me plainly, without examples” (p. 443). At this Raskolnikov launches into a third line of explanation: he might have murdered to help his mother and sister, but the genuine reason was that he wanted to dare (osmol’t’sja). Son’ja is yet more estranged and cries out, “Vy have left God, and he has struck you down” (ot boga vy otiushli, i vas bog porazil) and “Vy be quiet! Don’t vy dare, blasphemer” (p. 446), and “Do vy have the right to kill?” Raskolnikov, persisting in the exposition of his philosophy, states that he just wanted to try something out (poprobovat’), but soon realizes the hollowness of his position. He appeals to her for advice. True to her character, Son’ja responds to him, and changes pronouns for the seventh and last time in only nine pages of dialogue, “(Ty) rise up . . . (ty) bow down at the crossroads . . . (ty) confess to all the world” (p. 448). This unforgettable scene of the gradual union of two human beings ends with Raskolnikov’s agreement to go to the police eventually, and of Son’ja’s gift of a cross to be worn around the neck (natel’nyj krest), which had been presented to her by the murdered niece. As when urging him to confess at the crossroads, Son’ja’s offer of the cross, a symbol of ritual siblinghood, links this novel of intellectuals and outcasts to some of the most enduring and profound dimensions of Russian peasant culture. Just as in The Idiot and The Brothers Karamazov, the theme of solidarity between brothers and ritual siblings underlies much of Dostoevsky.

Toward the end of the book (e.g., pp. 556–558), the two young people use only ty to one another. Thus, an elective affinity gradually guides them through many stages of pronominal usage with a frequency and rapidity of change that is at times difficult to follow. Starting fairly close, as destitute and demoralized individuals of good family, they have been drawn yet closer, as a guilt-ridden murderer and an unwilling prostitute, and, at last, as husband and wife about to share the rigors and deprivation of a protracted exile in Siberia. Their relation differs profoundly from that depicted in Resurrection between a status-conscious blue-blood and a practiced whore.

A Special Kind of Switching: The Expressive and the Latent Ty

The present study, while primarily concerned with the cognitive aspects of culture, also touches at many points on sentiment and feeling, both as they were regularly patterned and in their idiosyncratic manifestations. Some mood, whim, or mental state could make the speaker play with or altogether ignore the usual rules, depending, of course, on his emotional makeup and social sensitivity. In such instances the pronoun often had latent or purely expressive functions.

To begin with, the second person pronouns—notably when in rapid-fire alternation—could express idiosyncratic impulses or the peculiarities of a situation. The shift to ty, both more frequent and more charged with emotion, was often an unconscious slip or outburst that, because of its transitory or covert character, did not necessarily evoke or reflect a mutual restructuring of the relationship. For example, ty was simply part of many petrified phrases of surprise, fear, or other strong emotion; thus, a country squire on fairly formal terms with a visiting gentleman, might burst out momentarily with a grateful, “Ah, ty are my benefactor” (Gogol 1947:89). A maid normally on asymmetrical terms with her master might cry out, on bumping into him in a dark corridor, “Ty, my lord, watch out!”

The informal pronoun was part of many frozen expressions such as, “The devil take you (tebja)!” Such exclamations often did little more than express the speaker’s sentiments about a touchy or startling situation but, at another level of contrast, they at least implied a fleeting and superficial shift in his relation to his interlocutor.

In the second place, personal derangement was also signaled by the excessive use of ty. Many persons when drunk grew familiar to all and sundry. In one striking scene from Lermontov a drunken and berserk Cossak ty’s an officer while cutting him down with a saber. More permanent disorganization was often associated with a readiness to use ty. An aristocratic woman, the daughter of a general, is gradually dying of tuberculosis in a squaid one-room apartment, surrounded by her starving children. Half-crazed and hysterical, she turns on the companion of her alcoholic husband with, “From the tavern! Ty were drinking with him! (Ty) get out!” (Dostoevsky 1951:32). Later, at the husband’s funeral, both go back to their usual vy. But a few pages later her maternal instincts are exacerbated by the guilt she feels over her daughter’s condition (p. 421), and she lashes out with ty no less than six times on half a page, and many times more if one counts the verbal forms that imply the pronoun. When she is lacerating a vicious gentleman who has accused her daughter of theft, she goes, “Ty look then! (Ty) look, (ty) look, now (ty) look!” These exclamatory pronouns symbolize her abject despair. The extreme use of the ty of pronominal instability was part of hysteria, or, in Prague School terms, the onset of insanity was signaled by a neutralization or canceling out of the distinction that set off the two pronouns from each other. I accept as apparently sound the theory of Jakobson (1942:83) that in aphasia, extreme senility, and so forth, individuals generally revert to the unmarked, generic form of their childhood years.
The informal pronoun could also serve as the unilateral, one-sided expression of an extreme ideology which, from one point of view, is a lack of contact with "reality." One handsome and egregiously chaste young woman "was on ty terms with everybody" (Tolstoy 1960a:416) as part of her revolutionary posture. An old wanderer and anarchist, who had been jailed once for "insanity," "believed only in himself" and used ty to all (Tolstoy 1960a: 437–438). Speaking more generally, the exclusive use of the informal pronoun often symbolized an outlook on man and society characteristic of the insane, the senile, hermits, and extreme revolutionaries, notably terrorists.

The "second person singular" was also used by normal persons in normal states to express involuntary or transient feelings of contempt, hostility, and the like, often quite independent of the social class of the speakers. In one instance, a poor village priest consistently reciprocates vy with the niece of a powerful landlord until questioning her about life as an actress, when he says "... sometimes with a spittly snout—one ought to be forbidden to even look at him—but ty have to proffer your lips." His switch of pronouns here was apparently unintentional, but the effect on his listener of the message and the pronoun itself was devastating. In another case, a doorman thinks to himself while turning away a undesirable gentleman, "Just the same, if they chase ty away from the threshold, then ty must be some sort of rascal" (Gogol 1947:153). Similarly, a young lackey, when nagged at about fixing some blinds, thinks to himself with reference to the princess, "But the devil take ty if I know what ty need" (Tolstoy 1960a:100). Finally, Gorki's grandmother does use vy to her husband, the patriarch, but during crises such as the great and ruinous fire she switches to ty. Later, when he is losing relatives and sinking into abject poverty, she uses nothing but the informal pronoun.

Such shifts in pronouns could explicitly mark a shift toward contempt coupled with vilification. The big trading houses had special agents known as "nephews" to make false bids at auctions, among other things. When a nephew fell into disfavor and was about to be booted downstairs, "the director would begin to interlard his speech even more with the pronoun ty, and with polite epithets in the nature of 'rascal,' 'good-for-nothing'..." (Zlatovratsky 1947:297). In another, better known case, a young woman, finding herself locked in a man's room, shifts to ty: "(Ty) open the door immediately, immediately, base man ... so this (means) rape!" Later she draws a miniature revolver and accuses her tormentor of having poisoned his wife: "Ty! Ty hinted it to me yourself; ty spoke to me of the poison ... I know, ty made a trip to get it ... ty had it ready ... it was ty ... it was decidedly ty, lout!" (Dostoevsky 1951:528). Here the pronoun is repeated seven times in two and a half lines of Russian, illustrating how a woman might switch to ty as a partial expression of her terror, or contempt, or some other underlying antipathy, and more generally, how a pronoun could function as an exclamation and a symbol of feelings about the addressee. In another case, a housemaid has been forced into concubinage. She directs her frustrated emotions into maternal love for an illegitimate child, until it is torn away and sent off. From then on she thinks only to her master, although sticking to vy in face-to-face conversations (Saltykov-Shchedrin 1958:232). Let us take a last example. Toward the close of the famous cross-examination Raskolnikov's interrogator, who had never deviated from the formal pronoun, thinks ty toward the man whom he has broken with his questions. In sum, a low opinion or even hatred could be mentally expressed through an unarticulated and therefore unreciprocated ty.

Affection and love could also be related to the covert or idiosyncratic thinking of ty. For instance, one aristocrat, when passing through the initial stages of what might become a liaison with a seductive St. Petersburg lady, finds himself conversing with ty "in the language of the eyes. The eyes said, 'Can ty love me?' and the answer was 'Yes'" (Tolstoy 1960a:265, 300, 314). A woman might be the first to make the shift with her eyes, although a man would normally take the initiative with the articulate form. Such intuitions, shared by all normal Russians, were made delightfully explicit by Pushkin in a verse entitled "Ty and Vy."

Пред нею задумчиво стой,
Свети очи с нею нет силы;
и говорю ей: как вы мила!
и мыслю: как тебя люблю!

This last quatrain may be translated as:

Pensive I stand before her now.
And cannot tear my eyes away.
"How dear vy are," I say,
And think, "How I do love tebya."

Practically all Russians, particularly of the gentry class, were potentially or mentally on ty terms with a larger number of persons than could be deduced from their overt linguistic behavior.

Such latent usage also mattered among the lower classes, except, perhaps, for the peasants in their communes. In one instance, a proletarian mother in her forties says, "Farewell," to a young female worker, but, looking after her from the window, she thinks, "Comrade! ... ah, you dear, may God give tebe an honorable (chestino) comrade for all your life" (Gorki 1946:153). The same proletarian mother-image regularly thinks ty but says vy to her son's sweetheart, an educated girl of vaguely middle-class background. She "felt a desire to say to her, '(Ty) my dear,
Indeed, I know that you love him... But she could not make up her mind to it” (ne reshala). And then later, "she pressed the extended hand and thought, '(Ty) my unhappy one." But soon thereafter she says aloud, "V'y speak truly" (Gorki 1946:196).

The foregoing data demonstrate some of the functions of the latent or mental Ty, and this relates to a more general point. One of the fallacies of behavioristic descriptive linguistics and of behavioral social psychology is that, by a sort of convention, the evidence is artificially limited to the overt, actually articulated forms. Such an approach, while usually valid for phonemics or many kinds of sociometrics, is apt to lead to distortion in semantics, because so much of meaning is private and never made explicit during the act of speech. On the one hand, such inner life is often maximally expressive, although barely reciprocated unless the addressee picks up the cue of gesture, intonation, and so forth. On the other hand, some of the most trenchant communication involves the combination of one spoken pronoun with paralinguistic features of body movement and intonation that would normally accompany the covert unspoken pronoun; thus, an explicit V'y combined with paralinguistic Ty (warmness of tone, and so forth), could often signal a felicitous union of personal respect and an affection whose strength was not mitigated by overt restraint; spoken V'y when conjoined with the modulations and gestures usual for certain Ty bonds could often signal revilement and disgust in the most painful manner. Unfortunately, the evidence being considered here does not permit many inferences of this sort, but, by the same token, the singular value of novels is that, unlike plays or psychological experiments, or most field work, they do provide evidence of what speakers would think in a variety of situations and status relationships.

Conclusions

Pronouns display unusual properties of emotional expressiveness, logical abstraction, and frequency in dialogue. Pronominal sets, like those of kinship terminology, are Janus-faced because linked into both the linguistic matrix of grammatical paradigms and the cultural matrix of social statuses and group categories. Among the many symbols of status in Russian, the second person singular pronouns were the most pervasive, frequent, and profound in their implications. Just two short words, operating in all speech events that involved two interlocutors, signaled the relative position of each pole in hundreds of dyadic relationships. Analysis of a representative sample of pronominal usage leads to the inference of a relational system of positional slots in the status system, and of other culturally specific categories. For Russian the categories which have to be postulated in order to predict pronominal usage more or less correlate with those inferred on the basis of external sociocultural evidence. The same, ego-oriented analysis of pronominal usage leads to the inference of discriminations or components that had to be controlled by the Russian in order to speak and understand. In the nineteenth century, at least, ten discriminations underlay the overwhelming mass of pronominal usage: topic of discourse, the context of the speech event, then age, generation, sex and kinship status, then dialect, group membership, and relative cultural and political authority, and finally, emotional solidarity. All these discriminations, in modified form, also underlay the equally important symbolism of the kinship terminology. Such overlap of components in even these two semantic subsystems suggests that a continuing analysis of social structure would lead to an ever diminishing margin of discoveries of discriminations, which are probably quite limited in number. Also, about six to a dozen such discriminations probably underlie most systems with two pronouns. The ten discriminations with their patterns of combination constitute the stable—though not static—system that accounts for nearly all the evidence and predicts with accuracy the usage in new texts.

The Russian usage was further characterized by a great deal of switching, by sudden changes of pronoun during a conversation or new encounter. Precisely because it depends on addition, loss, or realignment of discriminations, switching gives invaluable evidence on relative or hierarchical order. But while many important relationships between discriminations can be inferred, the total network is less accessible. This is partly just because some evidence is lacking. Moreover, a decision as to the relative status of any two discriminations can only be made within realistic contexts that involve several others; the total number of such possible combinations is very high. In addition, graphs of the relations between discriminations would only be valid if made for precisely defined dyadic pairs in precisely defined contexts; the axes would have to specify many subdivisions of the ten discriminations used above.

Switching and what I have called "pronominal breakdown" was interesting also because motivated by an interplay of the aforementioned cultural principles with what were essentially psychological forces of hostility, affection, ambivalence, mental derangement, and the like; the role of emotion was comparatively great in Russian life. Insight into the psychology of pronominal usage may be had, not only from switching, but from the expressive or latent role of Ty, particularly when the speaker reverts to the informal pronoun. In many cases provided by the realistic novel and experienced by any normal Russian, the informal pronoun was encoded mentally, often embedded in phrases of love or hate, even while the formal pronoun was being articulated in a more or less different context. I take this to be but an accessible instance of the more general phenomenon whereby people think or feel one continuous message while enunciating a second string of overt forms. The content of the two mes-
sages can range from virtual identity to total divergence. A linguistic theory which boldly exploits all available evidence and intuitions about such concomitant inner speech and other “psychological” phenomena will not only have grappled with some of the most challenging experience but be capable as well of predicting future events more fully and realistically. 16

References to Russian Sources


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10

Remarks on Ethnomethodology

HAROLD GARFINKEL

Harold Garfinkel is a professor of sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. He received his doctorate from Harvard University. His research for many years has been concerned with “common sense” knowledge of social structure, and with practical reasoning, as found in a variety of experimental and institutional settings. The material discussed here is drawn from a paper, much of which is incorporated in the first chapter of his book Studies in Ethnomethodology (1967). It outlines some of the basic assumptions about communication and social science methodology which underlie the work of Sacks and Schegloff in the following two chapters.

As the first part of the name suggests, ethnomethodology has ties both with ethnology and linguistics and with philosophy. In some respects, it is the counterpart within sociology of ethnographic semantics and ethnoscience (see Fraze, Chapter 3; Sturtevant 1964; Colby 1966; Tyler 1969). The second part of its name indicates the point of difference. Ethnography and ethnomethodology share a methodological stance in that both give primacy to explicating the competence or knowledge of members of a culture, the unstated assumptions which determine their interpretation of experience.

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