Living Norms

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1. Introduction

The notion of language norms has played an important role in practical ("applied") linguistics since antiquity and in linguistic theorizing since the 1800s.[1] But it was especially during the 1900s that the notion of language norms came to the fore. Leading structuralists, Nikolaj Trubetzkoy, Roman Jakobson, Louis Hjelmslev, Viggo Brøndal, Eugenio Coseriu, recognized the regularities in usage that lie beyond "the structured system" and made efforts to understand the relation between such regularities and "the system."[2] Concurrently with these developments in Europe, the behaviorist linguists in America rejected the idea that language usage should be governed by considerations of correctness. Descriptive linguists were enjoined to pay no attention to speakers' attitudes to usage and to hew to the observable part of linguistic reality ("God's truth"). And speakers were commanded to pay no attention to notions of correct-

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1   E.g. Jacob Hornemann Bredsdorff, 1817/1933, "Prøve af en efter Udtalen indrettet dansk Retskrivning," *J.H. Bredsdorffs Udvalgte Afhandlinger inden for Sprogvidenskab og Runologi*, ed. J. Glahder, Copenhagen, pp. 77–90; Hermann Paul, 1880/1970, *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte* (8th edition), Tübingen.

2   Thorough discussion of the issues in Eugenio Coseriu, 1952, *Sistema, norma i habla*, Montevideo, reprinted in 1962, *Teoria del lenguaje y lingüística general*, Madrid, translated by U. Petersen in 1968, "System, Norm und Rede," *Sprachtheorie und allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft: 5 Studien*, Munich, pp. 11–101. Also his "Sistema, norma e 'parola'," *Studi linguistici in onore di Vittore Pisani*, vol. 1, Brescia, pp. 235–53, translated as "System, Norm und 'Rede'," *Sprache. Strukturen und Funktionen: 12 Aufsätze zur allgemeinen und romanischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik 2), ed. U. Petersen, Tübingen, pp. 53–72.

ness; *Leave your language alone!* as one book title put it.[3] This emphasis on observation prepared the way for the study of linguistic variation.

In the following pages a few of the important twentieth-century contributions to the understanding of norms will be mentioned. But the aim of the exposition is not to provide a survey of the diverse norm concepts that can be found propounded in the relevant literature. Instead, where I refer to earlier conceptions, this is done to highlight a few leading ideas, in part, and mainly, to contrast the understanding I present on my own behalf with that of some of our predecessors.

2. *The term and the notion*

A concern for language norms has been part and parcel of the teaching of rhetoric for over two thousand years in western culture.[4] For a long time limited to Latin, this concern came to be directed towards the vernacular languages of Europe from the Renaissance on. It was the basis for the standardization of the orthographies of the languages of Europe—from Caxton in England (1470s) to Peter the Great (1708) in Russia. And it was manifested in efforts to cultivate both written and spoken language usage in these languages. Outstanding examples are the work of the Academie française since 1634 in France, Dr. Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language (1755) and the grammars by Lowth (1762) and Murray (1795), German grammarians such as Gottsched (1748) and Adelung (1781), and Russian grammarians from Lomonosov (1755) to Grech (1834). In the 1800s progress in the science of articulatory phonetics went hand in hand with a burgeoning public interest in elocution and orthoepy, not least in Britain and the United States (e.g. Alexander Bell in Britain and his son Alexander Melville Bell in the United States).

Against this background it is interesting that in English, the term *norm* became current only in the mid-1800s; before that date *norma* (pl. *normae*) was in use in the same sense (*OED*, s.v.).[5] It appears that *norm* was either a nativization of the Latin term or an adaptation of Fr. *norme*, if it was not a back formation from the adjective *normal*, which was in

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3   Robert A. Hall, 1950, *Leave your Language alone!* Ithaca, N.Y.

4   Heinrich Lausberg, 1970, *Elemente der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Einführung für Studierende der klassischen, romanischen, englischen, und deutschen Philologie* (5th edition), Munich.

5   J.A. Simpson & E.S.C. Weiner, 1989, *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition), Oxford & New York; abbreviated *OED*.

wide use since the 1500s (*OED*, s.v.). Russian *normal'nyi* is attested in the 1700s, while *norma* is first recorded as a dictionary entry in 1804; both are borrowed from French, whose *norme* goes back to Latin: *norma* "carpenter's square; rule, pattern, precept."[6]

Besides linguistics, the concept of norm plays an important role in many natural and human sciences as well as in logic. In a discussion of language norms, the first distinction to make—in logical terms—is between *declarative* and *deontic* norms. Under each of these headings it makes sense to distinguish between *explicit* and *implicit* norms.

The "living norms" in the title of this paper are the implicit deontic norms that will be characterized in section 4.2.

3. Declarative norms

There is no established term for what are here termed declarative norms. They are variously called *descriptive norms*, *statistical norms*, or simply *norms* or *rules*.[7] Some logicians call them *naturalistic norms* in contradistinction to *subsistent norms*, which are now called *deontic norms*.[8] The distinction between declarative norms and deontic norms corresponds to the German distinction between *Sein-Normen* and *Soll-Normen*. [9]

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6   P.Ia. Chernykh, 1993, *Istoriko-etimologicheskii slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka*, vols. 1–2. Moscow, s.v.

7   In sociology norms were long called *rules*. The notion of *rule* is discussed in relation to a "selective sample of potential synonyms" such as *regulation*, *principle*, *value*, *maxim*, *norm*, *standard*, *command*, *order*, *law*, and others by Susan Shimanoff, 1984, *Communication Rules: Theory and Research* (Sage Library of Social Research 97), Beverly Hills *&* London, p. 58.

8   Sven Ove Hansson, 2001, *The Structure of Values and Norms*, Cambridge.

9   The plethora of terms for norms is in part due to the different conceptions of reality of the scholars who have grappled with the phenomenon, notably the positivist (behaviorist) belief that only the directly observable parts of reality can be the subject of scientific investigation. This made it impossible for many to accept statements about any mental objects, including norms. Here I boldly recycle the term *declarative norms*; both it and *subsistent norms* were introduced by the German-Danish sociologist Theodor Geiger; their original metatheoretical context is characterized by Torben Agersnap, 2000, "Theodor Geiger: Pioneer of sociology in Denmark," *Acta Sociologica* 43 (4), pp. 325–30; p. 327. Subsistent norms is used in German sociolinguistics in the sense "intralinguistically defined statistical regularities"; cf. Klaus Gloy, 1975, *Sprachnormen*: 1. *Linguistische und soziologische Analysen*, Stuttgart *&* Bad Cannstatt.

The term *statistical norm* captures the most common aspect of descriptive norms, their expression in the form of statistics. But not all declarative norms can be so expressed.

3.1. Descriptive norms

Statistical norms owe their prominence to the widespread use of statistics in the physical sciences as well as in the life sciences. Everyone is familiar with such examples as meteorological norms, the temperature and precipitation norms and daily norms for the number of hours of sunshine for given localities that may be reported in the daily paper. Elsewhere in the human sphere we establish longevity norms, fertility norms, height and weight norms for children of different age, maturation norms, risk norms for different diseases, and so on. The social sciences present economic information in relation to economic growth norms, manufacturing norms, monthly employment norms, import and export norms, income norms, literacy and numeracy norms, graduation norms, etc. Linguists have long taken an interest in lexical associative norms, in norms of lexical frequency, and in text frequencies for different text types.

Sociolinguistic investigations establish usage norms for significant variables correlated with age group, gender, social class membership, or community allegiance. For each of such parameters a statistical norm can be established for (a sample of) members of a community. Along different lines, the same methods of observation and tallying can serve to identify norms for different conditions of speech production, one norm for unconstrained dialog among peers, others for elicited dialog, for reading aloud a narrative text, and for reading aloud a word list.

To provide guidance to its users without seeming to be prescriptive the editors of the *American Heritage Dictionary* pioneered "usage panels" that vote their preferences in the use of innovations or of nearly equivalent words or constructions, thereby suggesting a descriptive statistical norm. E.g., a given word may be accepted in one context by 53% of the usage panel, in another by 70% (s.v. *lifestyle*).[10]

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10 Geoffrey Nunberg, 1992, "Usage in the American Heritage Dictionary: The Place of Criticism," *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Boston, New York & London, pp. xv–xxiii.

3.2. Experiential norms

The statistical aspects of language usage have raised the interesting question whether a speaker's implicit, internal grammar contains a statistical component. If not, how would a person be able to speak with the right incidence of given variables under given circumstances? The question—and the statistics that prompt it—overlook the fact that the variables are meaningful elements (see sec. 4.2). The statistics merely reflect the quantitative approach chosen by the linguist. But the incidence of meaningful elements more likely reflects speakers' choices, perhaps habitual, perhaps not.

Still the question draws attention to an interesting fact about speakers, the sense we all have that some expressions are common in usage and others uncommon. We all have the occasional experience of using (or hearing) an expression we have not used (or heard) for a long time. And when it comes to larger pieces of text, we are all able to distinguish both odd usage and creative usage such as tropes and semantic or grammatical parallelism from "normal" usage. It is the same in phonology: Speakers have a clear sense of which phoneme combinations are rare and which are common in the lexicon, and in running text they easily identify such deviations from normal usage as alliteration, assonance, rime, and rhythmic regularity (meter), precisely because they are out of the ordinary. Every Spanish speaker recognizes that the sentence *Artajo trajo la valija abajo* is perfectly normal in every respect except that it deviates from the norms of phoneme frequency in running text; it contains an inordinate proportion of /x/ sounds.[11]

It would surely be a mistake to think of this ability as incidental to a speaker's (implicit) grammatical competence. When you first think of it, it may seem to reflect a sort of extragrammatical or metagrammatical knowledge that presupposes a grammatical competence. But in the life of the individual, the very basis for the formation of the systematic grammatical competence each of us develops and maintains through life must be precisely a metagrammar (by some called a "language acquisition device"). I would suggest that the experiential norms are the individual speaker's "usage log," a memory that is dedicated to language usage and forms an essential part of the metagrammar.[12] It records the speaker's

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11   Coseriu, 1952/1968, p. 64.

12   See further Ole Nedergaard Thomsen, 2006, "Towards an Integrated Functional-pragmatic Theory of Language and Language Change: In Commemoration of Eu-

language experiences throughout the speaker's life. Particularly in the speaker's earliest years it functions as a "clipboard" that holds the observed data from which the speaker infers the rules of the internal grammar. Besides, it contains a record of the speaker's and other speakers' usage, some of which will be integrated with the speaker's active competence, other parts of which will remain outside the speaker's habitual usage, as passive knowledge—permanently or until some special circumstance motivates their use.

Whatever the precise nature of these experiential norms, one can think of them as an implicit counterpart to the explicit statistical norms. They may lack the numerical precision of statistical norms. But they differ from the statistics by being seemingly all-encompassing, extending far beyond the few select topics that happen to be of interest to the linguist.

In relation to the descriptive norms, the experiential norms are primary: All speakers have them and they have existed as long as people have had the power of speech.

4.0. *Preferences, values and deontic norms*

In philosophy, such notions as norms and preferences, both of them central to different linguistic theories, began to attract the attention of logicians during the 1900s. Much of the pioneering work was done by Georg Henrik von Wright, who initiated the logical investigation of norms and preferences and their relation to deontic logic.[13] In his recent synthesis Sven Ove Hansson develops a coherent account in which an analysis of preferences (*rather this than that*) is the point of departure for the study of value predicates (*good* vs. *bad*) and of deontic logic, the reasoning that concerns obligation, permission, and prohibition. Underlying all three logical domains is the concept of value, without which there are no preferences, no evaluations, and no obligations.[14]

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genio Coseriu (1921–2002)," *Competing Models of Linguistic Change: Evolution and Beyond*, ed. O. Nedergaard Thomsen, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, pp. 307–37; p. 322.

13 References in Hansson, 2001.

14 The fundamental connection between *good* and *obligatory* has long been recognized: What is obligatory is "what is good to do and bad not to do" (Hansson, 2001, p. 164). As it happens, this semantic connection is reflected in colloquial language: What one *ought to* do or *musn't* do is what one *had better* do or *had better not* do; or, with only slightly less precision, in Russian, *Chto takoe khorosho i chto takoe plokho.*

In the real world preference, evaluation, and the deontic categories are not absolutes, they invariably make reference to attending circumstances, which can be taken into account as conditions. It is more difficult to integrate into a logical account the relative strength of preferences, the degrees of goodness in evaluations, and similarly the scalar nature of obligations. In everyday speech we acknowledge these gradations, distinguishing, for instance, *excellent*, *very good*, *quite good*, *fair*, etc. and, with reference to obligation, *must*, *ought*, *should*.[15] It is not surprising that such gradations are relevant to linguistic norms as well.

4.1. Prescriptive norms

No standard language can be established or maintained without the deontic categories just described. The whole point in having a standard, after all, is to have uniform usage, and this cannot be attained without identifying preferred and dispreferred variants, prescribing the former, and proscribing the latter. The maintenance of a standard language requires constant monitoring of its usage, and as innovations in usage occur, each one must be evaluated and either permitted as part of the norms or proscribed, perhaps with a recommended alternative. The undertaking depends on the speech community having, minimally, (i) "norm authorities," (ii) "norm codifiers," (iii) "norm enforcers," and (iv) a critical mass of willing "norm subjects."[16]

In the Soviet Union, the norm authorities were agencies of the state. The norm codifiers were a largely self-selecting group of language specialists. The norm enforcers were a hierarchy of agents certifying teachers on all levels, copy editors working in publishing houses, for newspapers and magazines, and in public agencies, from ministries to museums, ensuring that all printed matter that reached the public conformed to the norms, and finally radio and television workers, ensuring conformity with the norms in scripts as well as in oral performance.[17] The willing norm subjects were either native speakers of the variety of Russian

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15   Hansson, 2001, p. 131.

16   Renate Bartsch, 1987, *Norms of Language: Theoretical and Practical Aspects*, London & New York, pp. 72, 176.

17   In her memoirs, the writer Liudmila Petrushevskaia explains how she, as a radio reporter, was instructed how to find the proper interviewees and how to "help them" to say the proper words *in a proper way*. Liudmila Petrushevskaia, 2004, "Nakhodka," *Oktiabr'* 11, *http://magazines.russ.ru/october/2004/11/pe7.html*, I am grateful to Martin Paulsen for drawing my attention to this example.

represented by the norm codifiers or those who for professional or other reasons thought they must acquire, or as much as possible approximate their usage to, *obraztsovaia rech'* "exemplary speech," the normative ideal promoted by the norm codifiers and their agents.[18]

Anyone familiar with Russian grammars or dictionaries from the golden age of prescriptivism is familiar with their explicit use of the deontic categories obligation, permission, and prohibition.[19]

The standard norms include only prescribed and permitted forms. Prescribed forms are presented without comment; see (1)(a).[20] Permitted variants may have equal value and are then coordinated with *i* "and"; see (1)(b). Or one variant may be *menee zhelatel'nyi* "less desirable [less preferred]" and marked *i dop*[*ustimo*] "and, permitted." In cases where the norm is changing, such a variant may be marked *i dop*[*ustimo*] *ustar*[*evaiushchee*] "and, permitted, obsolescent"; see (1)(c).

Outside the prescribed and permitted norms are, first of all, the proscribed forms which adherents of the norms must avoid. They are evaluated on a scale of unacceptability. Variants that are dispreferred may be too old-fashioned and marked *ne rek*[*omenduetsia*] *ustar*[*evaiushchee*] "not recommended, obsolescent." Or they may be too new, perhaps corresponding to the developmental tendencies of the language, perhaps gaining ground among speakers, and perhaps one day becoming part of the norms;[21] they get the predicate ! *ne rek*[*omenduetsia*] "not recommended"; see (1)(d). Simply unacceptable forms are marked *ne* "not"; see (1)(e). More strongly dispreferred variants are labeled ! *ne prav*[*il'no*] "incorrect" (see (1)(c) and (f)), and very strongly dispreferred ones, ! *grubo neprav*[*il'no*] "grossly incorrect"; see (1)(g).

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18 R.I. Avanesov, ed. 1988, *Orfoepicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka: Proiznoshenie, udarenie, grammaticheskie formy*, Moscow, p. 6.

19 Terje Mathiassen dates this golden age to the years 1960–1980. The period sees the publication of numerous scholarly and didactic works dealing with *kul'tura rechi* "speech etiquette" and linguistic norms. Some titles: *Literaturnaia norma i variantnost'*, *Iazykovaia norma i statistika*, *Grammatika i norma*, *Morfologiia i norma*, *Sintaksis i norma*, *Literaturnaia norma v leksike i frazeologii*, *Iazykovaia norma*, *Normy sovremennogo russkogo iazyka*, *Variantnost' slova i iazykovaia norma*. See Terje Mathiassen, 1993 "Standardspråk og dialekt på det russiske området," *Standardspråk og dialekt: Seminarer i Oslo 1991 og 1992*, eds. K. Blaauw & H. Nordahl, Bergen, pp. 123–44.

20 This and the following examples are chosen at random from Avanesov, 1988.

21 Avanesov, 1988, p. 6.

(1) (a) **kél'tskii**, -aia, -oe [l'c]
    (b) **ískristyi**, -aia, -oe *i* iskrístyi
    (c) **sobrát'sia** […] -brálsia *i dop. ustar.* -bralsiá, […] bralós' *i dop.*
       -brálos' […]
    (d) **káshlianut'** […] ! *ne rek.* kashlianút', -nú, -niót, -ní
    (e) **iásli**, -ej [*ne* iasel'; *ne* iasléi]
    (f) **sobrát'sia** […] -bralás' […] ! *ne prav.* sobrálas'
    (g) **dokumént**, -a […] ! *grubo neprav.* dokúment

Likewise outside the norms are nonstandard forms that occur in classic or folk literature, which are marked *v poet. reči vozm*[*ožno*] "possible in poetic diction," respectively *v narodno-poet. reči vozm*[*ožno*] "possible in folk poetry." In modal logic, *possible* is the nondeontic counterpart of *permitted*. These forms are acceptable within their bounds, but they are not to be imitated.

Finally, the norm codifiers acknowledge the existence of words and variants that are established in diverse professional spheres, arts, crafts and academic fields, which they cannot regulate.[22] Such words and forms are labeled accordingly, e.g. *v profession*[*al'noi*] *rechi* "in professional jargon," *u muzykantov* "among musicians," *u moriakov* "among sailors," *u khimikov* "among chemists."

The prescriptive works acknowledge that different circumstances call for different language usage; cf. sec. 4.1.[23] Ozhegov, for instance, labels words *vysok[oe]* "elevated," *razg[ovornoe]* "colloquial," *knizhn[oe]* "bookish," *ofic[ial'noe]* "official" according to the styles of speech for which they are specialized.

Beyond all these categories Ozhegov notes elements of other language varieties, labeled *prost[orechnoe]* "low-style, vernacular" and *obl[astnoe]* "provincial," that occasionally intrude into standard speech. The former is a substandard style. The latter, simple label gives no hint that such "alien" elements, which are beyond the pale of the *Standard Language*, represent a rich diversity of other *language standards*.[24] These will be mentioned in the next section.[25]

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22 Avanesov, 1988, p. 6.

23 E.g. S.I. Ozhegov, 1989, *Slovar' russkogo iazyka*, Moscow.

24 Cf. John E. Joseph, 1987, *Eloquence and Power: The Rise of Language Standards and Standard Languages*, Oxford.

25 It is interesting to contrast these strict, explicit deontic norms, the social zeal with

4.2. Living norms

Quite independently of the Standard Language, there are countless local and regional spoken *language standards* in the Russian language area, rural and city dialects and sociolects spoken by millions of speakers. In this regard Russia is no different from dozens of other large language areas in the world. Each local or regional standard has its own more or less well articulated system of norms that include categories of register (formal, informal), stylistic indexing (polite, intimate, business-like, etc.), and social indexing (age, gender, class). All over the world there are language standards such as these that coexist with a Standard Language in a state of diglossia and include more or less firmly established scales of register variation by which their speakers produce compromises with Standard Language usage in those communicative situations for which the local standard is deemed inadequate or inappropriate. Similarly speakers of the Standard Language who live in such communities may indicate their solidarity with the local community by using lexical, grammatical, or phonological elements of the local norms when interacting with the locals. This is how it is in every language community in which a Standard Language has a monopoly on certain communicative functions.

None of these local language standards has any "norm authorities" or "norm codifiers" or any hierarchy of professional "norm enforcers." They are forms of speech that are passed on as oral traditions, without the "support" of a written standard, the way all spoken languages have been passed on, since time immemorial, from generation to generation (or from one age cohort to the next). Each competent speaker of such a local standard uses its registers, stylistic means, and social markers appropriately in relation to the circumstances of communication and with such regularity that it is clear this behavior is part of their linguistic competence. In addition, the speakers are able to criticize and correct them-

which they were imposed, and the eagerness with which attempts have recently been made to resurrect them with the mainly utilitarian approach to usage guidance in the British and American tradition. On the former, see Michael S. Gorham, 2006, "Language Culture and National Identity in Post-Soviet Russia," *Landslide of the Norm: Language Culture in Post-Soviet Russia*, eds. I. Lunde & T. Roesen (Slavica Bergensia 6), Bergen, pp. 18–30. On the latter, see the numerous detailed discussions pro et contra on questions of usage in Henry W. Fowler, 1954, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, Oxford; or the usage notes *passim* in the *American Heritage Dictionary* and the statement by Nunberg, 1992.

selves and one another when they deviate from appropriate usage.[26] This shows that both their own performance and their evaluation of others' performance are based on a shared system of values, which is embodied in their *appropriateness norms*.[27]

Appropriateness norms are part of the grammar of a language. They differ from the explicit, prescriptive norms (sec. 4.1) in several ways. First of all, they are simpler: While the Standard-Language norm enforcers have to do battle with different language standards all over the country by proscribing their expressions, the living norms of a given speech community predominantly encompass expressions that should be used and may be used. The way bearers of other language standards speak is their business. Secondly, the living norms are not categorical, but relative: Appropriateness is always relative to circumstances, even taboo expressions are only conditionally proscribed. Thirdly, and most importantly, by regulating the deployment of variants, the rules of the living norms constitute the variants as (subsidiary) indexical signs. Such signs occur in practically every utterance and enable a speaker to select register, stylistic, and social markers that are appropriate to the speaker's persona and chosen role in any speech act. Indexical signs that are in accordance with the appropriateness norms make utterances cohere with the circumstances in which they are produced.

In acquiring them, new speakers may receive some explicit, metalingual guidance from elders or coevals in speaking properly.[28] But in relation to the complexity of language norms, such guidance is at best minimal, and its chief effect may be to draw the learner's attention to important categories of the norms. The appropriateness norms, like the rest of a linguistic system, can be acquired by an individual without any

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26 Cf. David K. Lewis, 1969, *Convention: A Philosophical Study*, Cambridge.

27 More on the relation between values and norms below. The term *appropriateness norms* is from Henning Andersen, 2001, "Actualization and the (Uni)directionality of Change," *Actualization* (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 219), ed. H. Andersen, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, pp. 225–48; also 2006, "Synchrony, Diachrony, and Evolution," *Competing Models of Linguistic Change: Evolution and Beyond* (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 279), ed. O. Nedergaard Thomsen, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, pp. 59–90. Bartsch, 1987, p. 171, calls these *pragmatic norms*.

28 The extent of such guidance presumably varies greatly within individual societies; it varies greatly among societies and may be absent in some; cf. Ronald Scollon & Suzanne B.K. Scollon, 1979, *Linguistic Convergence: An Ethnography of Speaking at Fort Chipewyan*, Alberta, New York, San Francisco & London.

explicit instruction, by abductive inference based on the observed usage of others; cf. sec. 3.2. The adjustment of the individual's usage to that of his fellows takes place almost exclusively through what I have called an implicit, wordless (practical) metadialog, in which each speaker's usage is confronted with that of others, and each member of the speech community infers which elements of usage are appropriate under what circumstances. It is through this implicit metadialog that the members of a community develop and maintain a consensus understanding of the norms of usage.

> [This] is a dialogue in which all members of a speech community participate throughout their lives. In this metadialogue, the use of an innovation in a specific context is tantamount to a motion that it be accepted for general use in such contexts, a motion which the interlocutors may second, reject or, for the moment, leave undecided. As they select novel and traditional expressions in accordance with their individual hypotheses about their appropriateness—relative to the genres of discourse, styles of diction, categories of role, status and social class recognized in the given culture—the speakers in effect negotiate the norms that they look upon as their community norms.
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> Nothing prevents a speech community from verbalizing this metadialogue about the norms, and in some cultures explicit discussions of proper usage are standard. But the verbalized dialogue can never be more than fragmentary. The full metadialogue by contrast, is part and parcel of the life of any language tradition. For no community values can be established except through the dialectic of usage, and no values can be maintained except through renewal. Thus it is by the temporary consensus mediated by this unspoken dialogue that the tacit conventions of a language are shaped and constantly reshaped as long as the language is spoken.[29]

Undoubtedly, the role each one plays in the implicit shaping of the living norms of their language is determined by their different status in the

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29 Henning Andersen, 1989, "Understanding Linguistic Innovations," *Language Change: Contributions to the Study of its Causes* (Trends in Linguistics; Studies and monographs 43), eds. L.E. Breivik & E.H. Jahr, Berlin, pp. 5–28; p. 25.

community, their different positions in its communicative networks, and the structure and density of these.[30]

In recent writings Ole Nedergaard Thomsen accepts and develops the idea of the implicit metadialog sketched above.[31] He posits that the results of this metadialog are norm rules of the same social order as a legal system with deontic force.

> The linguistic norms (in the general juridical sense) are social norms, that is, *impersonal directives* […] followed by the speakers and […] felt by them as collectively binding […]. They are […] tacit and unwritten, a practice of speaking. Only parasitically may they be externally registered […] by an elitarian legislative assembly. […] [They] exist as tokens in the minds/brains of single individual speakers, as their internal functional languages, their dialects, and their hypotheses about each others' dialects.[32]

The idea of "impersonal directives" (or imperatives) is one of the standard explanations of norm (or rule) conformity in the social sciences.[33] This explanation has long been found inadequate for several reasons. In the present context, where it is understood that the norms are negotiated collectively, the supposed directives cannot be described as impersonal, they must be collective or social directives. But this terminology implies a group pressure on the individual that does not seem to correspond to reality. The phrase "impersonal directives" fits the rigid authoritarian, explicit prescriptive norms better than the implicit living norms. These are largely voluntarily adopted; by their action they are better described as inner precepts; and they are always open to renegotiation in speech.

Here it is useful to recall the broader conceptual framework that is presented by Hansson, in which values form the foundation of both preferences and deontic norms (sec. 4.0). What is negotiated in the implicit metadialog is first and foremost usage values. These form the foundation for collectively accepted usage preferences and deontic usage norms.

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30 Cf. Lesley Milroy, 1982, *Language and Social Networks*, Oxford; James Milroy, 1992, *Linguistic Variation and Change*, Oxford.

31 Thomsen, 2006, p. 326.

32 Thomsen, 2006, p. 330.

33 See Shimanoff, 1984; Bartsch, 1987.

It is a genuine logical problem how declarative norms are converted to values and deontic norms, that is, how what speakers hear spoken comes to be interpreted as what should be spoken. Perhaps what is consensual is viewed as good. If so, deontic norms may follow naturally from usage values in accordance with the ethical maxim, He who knows what is Good, does what is Good (Socrates).

In any case, as long as they share the same usage values, members of the speech community experience the usage norms as equally valid. But they may feel bound by the norms to different degrees, that is, the appropriateness norms may have different deontic strength for different speakers; cf. sec. 4.0. In this way the living norms differ essentially from a body of laws, which applies equally to all.

The different deontic strength of linguistic norms for different speakers is an important fact about language, which is relevant both to synchrony and diachrony. In synchrony, it explains why in any speech community some speakers will firmly adhere to the received implicit norms while others may be willing to try out new forms of expression, regardless of whether these have any special utility. In diachrony it is one of the factors that explain stability and renewal in languages. This difference between people can be observed in other forms of social behavior as well and is a factor in the eternal tug of war between continuity and change in cultural history in general. It is the individuals with the weaker commitment to the received norms that are more likely to innovate, to adopt innovations, and to be in the vanguard of any new development. It is the individuals with the stronger commitment to the norms that can be counted on to preserve the inherited values the longest and more strongly resist change.

5. Landslide of the norm

In considering the "landslide of the norm" in the recent history of the Russian language it may not be amiss to have some understanding of the nature of linguistic norms, their place in grammar, and the way in which they come into being.

In this article it has been my aim to highlight the contrast between the rigid, explicit prescriptive norms, imposed from above in an authoritarian society, and the more fluid, implicit living norms that the speakers

of any orally transmitted language collectively shape and reshape in the constant, implicit metadialog they carry on whenever they speak.

The Soviet Russian prescriptive norm project was evaluated, incidentally and by implication, in the sociolinguistic study of Leonid Krysin, the first of its kind in the Soviet Union, and it was found to be a failure: Among the several social classes for which Krysin's team collected data, none came close to matching the prescriptive norms except one—the class of informants labeled "philologists."[34] After decades of investment in standardization, the fruits of the labor of the thousands of teachers and other language workers turned out to be pretty slim pickings. If this was the bad news, the good news is that the population of the country did not depend on these paper norms for the functioning of its language standards: The language continues to be spoken effectively in its numerous variants all over the inherited Russian language area as well as in the diasporas, old and new.

As a preparation for this contrast between explicit and implicit deontic norms I characterized two kinds of declarative norms, the linguists' metalingual descriptive (statistical) norms and the speakers' experiential norms. They and the two kinds of deontic norms discussed in this article fit together in a unique set of relations.

The experiential norms of individual speakers (sec. 3.2) enter into the implicit metadialog through which the living norms are negotiated (sec. 4.2).

The usage produced in accordance with the living norms (sec. 4.2) can be described in statistical terms (sec. 3.1). And so can (approximations to) the "exemplary speech" of the prescriptive norms (sec. 4.1).

The prescriptive norms (sec. 4.1) reflected the living norms of a small segment of the population. Not surprisingly many Russians with other backgrounds continue to value these norms, which were inculcated into them as children, and many professional linguists and concerned lay speakers see a need for a more carefully cultivated standard usage, particularly in the media. Perhaps for many this is largely an esthetic issue. But some may fear the possibility that without greater adherence to uniform norms the speech community might disintegrate into a welter of regional and social varieties and would lose touch with its literary herit-

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34 L.P. Krysin, ed. 1974, *Russkii iazyk po dannym massovogo obsledovaniia: Opyt sotsial'no-lingvisticheskogo izucheniia*, Moscow.

age. What effect this interest of concerned citizens in normative usage will have depends entirely on the extent to which it is transformed into implicit, living norms.

Since most standard languages come into being through dialect leveling and koinéization,[35] negotiated in implicit metadialogs, Russian may one day have a more widely spoken and more uniform Standard Language than was achieved through the "Soviet standardization project." It will be interesting to see how close this future Standard Language will be to the Soviet *obraztsovaia rech'*.

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35   Einar Haugen, 1972, *The Ecology of Language*, Stanford.