

This paper investigates the "economy of linguistic exchange" (Bourdieu 1977) between peasants and Bolsheviks, 1917 – 1931. While much has been written about physical violence inflicted on peasants by Bolsheviks, systematic symbolic violence has received less attention. Two theoretical backgrounds inform this study. One is Bourdieu's notions of symbolic capital and symbolic domination, and his principle that understanding the dynamics of social interaction in any field of activity, including linguistic exchange, means starting with the overall class structure of society and seeing how it correlates with the power structure of the field under study. (Bourdieu 1983) The other is the recent linguistic interest in *formulaic language*, broadly defined to include frequent phrases, syntactic frames, and idiomatic expressions of various degrees of non-compositionality (Wray, 2012; Wood 2015).

This paper performs a study of peasant texts in *Krest'ianskaia Gazeta*, *Sel'kor*, and other contemporary sources -- such as Meromskii (1930); Shafir (1923) -- to elaborate the old opinion that peasant formulaic language was largely destroyed over the first 15 years of Soviet rule. In 1926, the newspaper *Izvestiia* wrote: "The colorful, vivid, expressive language of the countryside is deteriorating. Talk with an old man, your heart fills with joy: colorful sparkling speech. Hear a young man and you're astonished: "to the degree that," "in sum total," "in point of fact," and similar useless nonsense." My paper documents this deterioration process at the level of precise lexical detail, showing how the invasion of the dominant dialect goes beyond introducing new vocabulary and phraseology: conceptual metaphors and syntactic parallelisms are destroyed; ultimately, a very different relationship between language and signifier is created. While peasant language is concrete and assumes that all words have referents, the formulaic sequences of the dominant dialect are frequently just desemanticized chips in a verbal play that have symbolic capital but no meaning.

The sociolinguistic background is as follows: in February 1917, the Bolsheviks were a party of about 5,000, mostly intelligentsia, linguistically indistinguishable from other Social-Democrats. They spoke standard educated Russian with a rich admixture of professional Social-Democratic jargon. A year later, 169,200 Bolsheviks formed a new ruling class, comprising two different groups: the initial elite, and a larger group of new Bolsheviks, "strivers" who imitated them with frequent errors and malapropisms. Their language was the interface between the state and the peasant. Both the natural process of symbolic domination and the conscious policy inculcating city and party language, resulted in the near-total destruction of the language that informed the way peasant characters speak in Tolstoy and Platonov.

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