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Heteroglossia

Valerij Tjupa
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1 Definition

This term results from a translation (Morson & Emerson 1990) of Mixail Baxtin's neologism *raznorečie*. According to Baxtin's understanding of language use, a "social person," who is also a "speaking person," operates not with language as an abstract regulatory norm, but with a multitude of discourse practices that form in their totality a dynamic verbal culture belonging to the society concerned: "language is something that is historically real, a process of heteroglot development, a process teeming with future and former languages, with prim but moribund aristocrat-languages, with parvenu-languages and with countless pretenders to the status of language which are all more or less successful, depending on their degree of social scope and on the ideological area in which they are employed" (Baxtin [1934/35] 1981: 356–57).

2 Explication

The category of heteroglossia has entered the scholarly apparatus of narratology because the verbal presentation of the narration necessarily possesses certain linguistic characteristics that create the effect of a voice. Narration not only takes place from a particular standpoint in time and space, but also inevitably has a certain stylistic color, a certain tone of emotion and intention that can be described as "glossality." This is directed at the reader's ability to hear (Tjupa 2006: 35–7).

Heteroglossia is a "dialogical," agonal structure of verbal communication whose essence lies in the fact that "within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one's own and another's word is being waged" (Baxtin [1934/35] 1981: 354), a struggle, that is, involving two or more codes between which links of selection and connotation emerge. The former kind of link is based on the use of different words to describe one and the same reality in different languages; the latter kind of link on the description of different realities using the same words in different languages.

The phenomenon of heteroglossia is relevant to narratology in so far as the

narrative text is composed of two elements, the narrator's (Margolin → Narrator [1]) text and the characters' (Jannidis → Character [2]) text (Doležel 1960, 1973; Schmid [1973] 1986, 2005). The second of these "heteroglot" texts that are "alien" to one another presents itself as "utterance within utterance," whereas the first is encountered as "utterance about utterance" (Vološinov [1929] 1973: 115), as a "framing context" that, "like the sculptor's chisel, hews out the rough outlines of someone else's speech, and carves the image of language out of the raw empirical data of speech life" (Baxtin [1934/35] 1981: 358).

The text framed by narrative can be a diverse one (a bundle of heterogeneous texts produced by various characters) or a zero text (in the case of a silent hero whose position within the event is not verbalized). In the latter case, the character's text is indeed pushed out of the presentation of the narration, but it cannot be eliminated from the story of narration of whose chain of events it is a part. As a silent dialogizing background to the narrator's speech, it can have a crucial influence on that speech, on its stylistically relevant lexical features, its syntax, and its tonality of emotion and intention (consider Dostoevskij's "Gentle Spirit"). And in the opposite case, that of a text stylized as *skaz* (Schmid → Skaz [3]), in which "the narrator's speech has at one and the same time the function of representing and of being represented" (Schmid 2003: 191), the role of an actively silent dialogizing background is performed by the virtual zero text of the author, who would have told the story in question in different words (Schönert → Author [4]).

The effect of heteroglossia can be used in widely different ways by the presentation of the narration, ranging from a "war of languages" (Barthes [1984] 1986) to their tautology (zero heteroglossia). Between these poles we find various ways of incorporating intratextual discourses into the narrator's text in the manner of quotation, as well as various forms of "textual interference" (Schmid 2003: 177–222) or, as Baxtin ([1934/35] 1981: 304) puts it, "hybrid construction," namely "an utterance that [...] contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages,' two semantic and axiological belief systems."

The discourse related by the narrator can, for him, have the status of an authoritative linguistic action. The turn to the authoritative text-behind-the-text (the reading of the Gospel at the end of Tolstoj's *Resurrection*, or the psalter in Bunin's story "Exodus") creates the effect of a hierarchically constructed heteroglossia. The opposite of this kind of hierarchy occurs when a narrator occupies a position of power where he appears as "editor" (Uspenskij [1970] 1973: 43) of the characters' direct speech, transforming it as he sees it and thereby reducing the overall level of heteroglossia in the text.

Following the norm established in the classical realism of the 19th century, the

direct speech of a character often serves to express that character's linguistic view of the world, which can differ to a greater or lesser extent from the view of the world on which the narration is based. In such cases, the lexical, grammatical, and intonation-related syntactic features of the character's text contrast with the narrator's text and combine to form a certain voice belonging to a different subject. The quoted voice does not have the same compositional standing as the quoting voice: fragments of the characters' speech are extracted from the flow of the characters' verbal activity by the narrator in a manner similar to the way in which the narrator makes selections from the flow of connected events belonging to (historically real or invented) reality. The axiological hierarchy need not be present here, though. In certain special cases, texts-in-texts of this kind can be presented in a different national language, e.g. French in Tolstoj's *War and Peace*: "When foreign and irregular speech is represented […], the author stresses the distance between the speaking character and the describing observer" (Uspenskij [1970] 1973: 51). Even in the context of a single national language, however, the heteroglossia that results from the distance between two or more "socio-linguistic belief systems" (Baxtin [1934/35] 1981: 356) can act as an effective means of organizing the narrative world of a work. Thus, in Lermontov's "The Fatalist" (a chapter of the novel *A Hero of our Times*), the words of the Cossacks on the one hand and of Maksim Maksimyč on the other are stylistically brief, but clearly set apart from the speech of Pečorin (the narrator). They are the voices of another life, the life of the "others." The replies by Vulič and the unnamed officers, on the other hand, cannot be stylistically distinguished from the text of the narrator. In this case, zero heteroglossia points not to the anonymity of an act of narration that is inextricably bound to the world of transmission it shares with the characters (as in Homer's *Iliad*), but to the potential power of the narrator where discourse is concerned: for him, the characters (primarily Vulič, Pečorin's inner *Doppelgänger*) seem in some way to be actors in a drama taking place inside his lonely mind. This is the zero heteroglossia of Romantic discourse. By providing other characters with lexical, grammatical, and intonation-related syntactic voices, however, Lermontov brings his prose beyond the boundary of the cultural paradigm of romanticism.

Interference, or "contaminations" (Uspenskij [1970] 1973: 32), between the narrator's text and the characters' text can take place through forms of indirect speech and free indirect speech (McHale → Speech Representation [5]), for which Schmid (2003: 216–39, 2005: 177–222) suggests a detailed classification. The leading role in a textual interference with many forms is performed by the narrator's text, which can be characterized with reference to its intention regarding the characters' text (its language, its style, its horizon of values). Using Baxtin's terms, we can distinguish here between (a) "assimilation," (b) "demarcation" (*razmeževanie*), and (c) "dialogized interillumination" as fundamental intentions. In the case of (a), we are

concerned with the incomplete absorption of the characters' text by the narrator's text: a lexical, grammatical, or syntactic remnant of a foreign discourse can be identified in the narrator's speech. In the case of (b), there is an axiological divergence, a confrontation of horizons in which every foreign word is carefully preserved but given an undertone of caricature in the narrator's speech. In the case of (c), we would speak of a convergence of horizons that have equal axiological status and contain "truths" of equal value complementing each another.

The types of textual interference just described can be mutually interrelated and intertwined in a complex manner. In Dostoevskij's story "Mr Prokharčin," for example, this leads to mental conflict, intensified to extremes, between the eponymous hero, characterized by his egocentric, self-directed speech, and his surroundings, the brotherhood of the officials who formulate their views of life in a flowery style. In the process, the narrator (a biographer who represents the story with a sideways glance at the lovers of a noble style) manipulates all three possible intentions of heteroglossia with virtuosity in his efforts to establish a balance between the opposing positions.

More recent prose (since Čechov) has seen the possibility of having mutually complementary narrative entities emerge and establish themselves; this makes the convergence of narrator's text and characters' text an all-encompassing principle of narration. Here, without losing its crucial compositional function, the "voice of the narrator" draws near to the "axiological and linguistic horizon of the hero" (Schmid 2003: 233); the narrator, declining to exercise his power, does not give himself the last word, leaving no more than meaningful pointers behind instead (consider Solženicyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovič*). This device, which bears a superficial resemblance to *skaz* but is really the opposite of *skaz* styling, has been given the name "free indirect authorial narration" (*nesobstvenno-avtorskoe povestvovanie*; Koževnikova 1994). This choice of term, though, does not seem entirely appropriate: the narrative text, as the result of the aesthetic verbal activity of "indirect speaking" (Baxtin [1959/60] 1996: 314, 1986: 110), is never directly correlated with the author; there are always mediating entities, and so the narrative text is always an indirect authorial utterance.

For the most part, the phenomenon of heteroglossia in narrative discourse is treated as an aspect of the more general problem of point of view (Uspenskij [1970] 1973); it is described in such cases as "phraseological perspective" (Korman [1975] 2006) or "linguistic" perspective (Schmid 2003, 2005). Assuming that the terms are equivalent in this way, though, can give cause for objection. The discursive practice to which a text (or the quoted words of a text) belongs does not end with perspective: behind the discourse there lies a certain axiological and cultural,

ideological and linguistic, socio-psychological horizon attached to those who are speaking/writing. This horizon contains all the potential objects, found by the mind in question, of a subjective stance concerning them; it is a potential field of reference for the discourse. Perspective, on the other hand, is always actual: it represents a "single (unique, 'immediate') relationship between subject and object" (Korman [1975] 2006: 184), it activates a certain segment of the horizon and positions the subject itself within that horizon. As a narratological category, it may well be sufficient to define narrative perspective as a "position of the 'observer' (the narrator, the character) in the represented world," as a position that "expresses the author's evaluative stance toward this subject and its mental horizon" (Tamarčenko 2004: 221). Even in the text, the horizon of a narrating entity itself has only a potential existence: it is represented by the stylistic "symptoms" of its boundaries which are activated by the contrapuntal and/or polyphonic heteroglossia of the multi-voiced text. In Lermontov's novel, for example, the fatalist Vulič is provided with an ideological and chronotopic perspective, but does not have a voice of his own, since his axiological horizon is, as that of a special being, potentially equivalent to the horizon of Pečorin the narrator himself, another special being who remains a doubting officer.

3 History of the Concept and its Study

Baxtin's pupil and successor Vološinov ([1926] 1995, [1929] 1973) must be credited with providing the first fundamental formulation of the problem of heteroglossia. In particular, he set up the term "speech interference" (Vološinov [1929] 1973: 148). In Russian literary studies, the terms "voice" and "socio-linguistic horizon" have become established in the wake of Baxtin's work on Dostoevskij (1929, [1963] 1984) and of his studies on the genre of the novel (Baxtin [934/35] 1981). Baxtin conceives of voice in two dimensions at once: as one of the products of the general language-producing "language-intention" of the speaker and as a special stylistically realized "language" of a speaker, a language with its own picture of the world ("its own world inextricably bound up with the parodied language" [1934/35] 1981: 364).

The term "voice" was introduced to Western literary studies by Lubbock ([1921] 1957: 68), who believes that the author can make use of both his own language and the languages (of the minds) of his characters. Western scholarship became acquainted with Baxtin's ideas about heteroglossia via the work of Kristeva ([1966] 1980, 1970), whose writings have enjoyed a wide and favorable international reception. In enthusiastically adapting Baxtin's theory to the emerging ideology of postmodernism, however, this French scholar distorted his ideas significantly: she replaced Baxtin's "plentitude of speech" with the concept of intertextuality; she speaks of an "insight first introduced into literary theory by Baxtin: any text is

constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*" (Kristeva [1966] 1980: 66; italics in original). In reality, Baxtin saw intersubjectivity as one of the fundamental concepts of his ontological and gnoseological deliberations, and the text was never conceived of as an anonymous "mosaic" (in the sense of Kristeva's thesis that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations"). For Baxtin, the text was a compositionally unitary utterance of a particular (in literature fictive) subject, a subject within which there are foreign words and entire foreign intratextual discourses that can enter into various relationships with the discourse surrounding them: subordinated and subordinating relationships, relationships of discussion as equals, and relationships of solidarity.

Somewhat later, without turning to Baxtin for support, Barthes ([1984] 1986) considered the phenomenon of heteroglossia in his essays "The Division of Languages" and "The War of Languages." Barthes, though, treated it as a negative phenomenon, one that must be overcome by "progressive" *écriture* (Barthes [1984] 1986: 124). In his *Encyclopedia* entry "Texte," Barthes (1973)—who similarly to Baxtin conceives of language as a multiplicity of voices surrounding the text on all sides—treats the text as no more than a "new fabric woven out of old quotations." This is the path that led to deconstruction, which replaces heteroglossia with intertextuality and thereby effectively suspends the narratological problem of narrating as a positioning of the narrator in discourse.

Among the works that have restored an appropriate understanding of Baxtin's "plentitude of speech," special mention must be made of a book by the creators of the English term "heteroglossia" (Morson & Emerson 1990). This study has had a visible influence on contemporary narratology, despite the authors' critical stance toward the narratological approach to the study of literature. Close reading and an appropriate development of the possibilities contained in Baxtin's typology of the prose word are typical of Schmid's narratology (2005). In Russian-language scholarship, Baxtin's narratological ideas, particularly that of heteroglossia, have been developed by Tamarčenko (2004) and Tjupa (2006), as well as in Schmid's book (2003, 2005).

4 Topics for Further Investigation

An important starting point for narratological studies is the need to distinguish between the categories of perspectivization (the system of points of view) and glossality (the system of voices), which are of equal status and complement each other. Genette ([1972] 1980: 186) had already begun making this distinction when

he separated the question “who sees?” from that of “who speaks?”
(Translated by Alastair Matthews)

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