The Sociolinguistics of Variation in Odessan Russian

Lenore A. Grenoble

> Of course, Odessa had a common lingua franca; and, of course, this was a language of Slavic descent; but I deny with indignation the widely held misunderstanding that this was corrupted Russian. First of all—not corrupted; second—not Russian.
> —Zhabotinskii, "My Capital"[1]

1. Introduction

Odessan Russian (OdR) is a contact variety of Russian that emerged with massive immigration into the region that is currently Odessa, officially founded in 1794. It was robustly spoken at the beginning of the 20th century by some but not all segments of the population; since WW II it has been in steady decline. OdR is a contact variety, with substrate influences from Yiddish, Ukrainian, and Polish. The impact of contact can be seen in all linguistic levels (phonological, lexical, morphological, and syntactic), as well as lexical borrowing from other languages, including French, Greek, and Turkic. Today OdR is an endangered dialect with speakers concentrated in Brighton Beach,

[1] "Конечно, была у Одессы и общая lingua franca; и, конечно, былъ это языкъ славянскаго корня; но я съ негодованіемъ отрицаю широко распространенное недоразумѣніе, будто это былъ испорченный русскій. Во первыхъ, не испорченный; во вторыхъ, не русскій" (Zhabotinskii 1930, 80).

NY (and perhaps Israel); the variety currently spoken in Odessa differs greatly, due to significant Ukrainian immigration into the city.

Linguistic documentation of Odessan Russian is scant. In 1855 Zelenetskii published a brief (34-page) description in response to a request from authorities in the Odessan Pedagogical District who had noticed that the local speech used "non-Russian words and entire expressions and phrases that do not correspond with the rules and spirit of the language of the fatherland" (1855, 3). Extensively building upon this small database, Dolopchev (1909) created a relatively large lexical corpus in the form of a dictionary.[2] Otherwise, most of the documentation consists of literary, fictional texts, a few songs, and some humorous but unreliable pseudo-lexicons (e.g., Smirnov 2002), or jocular pseudo-textbooks (e.g., Steciuchenko and Ostashko 1999). A more serious but shorter lexicon for Odesskaia oblast´ is Barannik et al. (1982). There is little to no documentation as defined by Himmelmann (2005, 1998). There have been surprisingly few scholarly works devoted to serious linguistic analysis. Exceptions include Stepanov (2004), reviewed in Mechkovskaia (2006); shorter studies include Demyanova (1987), Demyanova et al. (1989), Verbitskaia et al. (1986), and Zybatow (1997). See Cukierman (1980), Levinson (1927), and Shishov and Stetsiuchenko (1991) for the use of Odessan Russian in literature; Rothstein (2001) for songs. Despite the fact that it figures large in Russian popular culture, Odessan Russian is an understudied variety.

The present paper draws on a larger database (Grenoble and Kantarovich, forthcoming) of OdR as used by writers born in Odessa in the second half of the 19th century:

I. E. Babel´ (1894–1940)
V. M. Inber (1890–1972)
L. O. Karmen (1876–1920)
V. P. Kataev (1897–1986)
S. S. Iushkevich (1868–1927)
L. O. Utesov (1895–1982)
V. E. Zhabotinskii (1880–1940)

This restriction helps control the data by relying only on writers who were raised in a setting where they could have heard OdR from birth. It excludes certain other literary figures, such as Konstantin Paustovsky, who is often

---

[2] The first edition of Dolopchev's dictionary was published in 1886 and the second (expanded and corrected) edition in 1909 (used here). In addition to Dolopchev's dictionary and Zelenetskii (1855), Nikolich (1887, 1888) includes some relevant information, but I have been unable to obtain it as of this writing.

cited as a source of OdR. But he was born and raised in Moscow, and thus for the purposes of this study cannot be considered a native speaker of OdR.

The variation in OdR seen in the works of these authors in part reflects actual sociolinguistic variation at the time they wrote. It is characteristic of a diglossic situation and the use of certain varieties in social networks (sections 2 and 3). Different portrayals of Odessan speech can further be explained in terms of literary dialect (section 4).

2. Odessan Russian as a Sociolect

Odessan Russian is a sociolect, a language variety used by a particular social group, in this case the Jewish population of Odessa. Whether non-Jews spoke Odessan Russian in the early Soviet period is an open question. At the turn of the last century its usage was associated with lower, non-educated classes. Zelenetskii (1855, 34) asserts that these words are not used either by the Russians of the upper class, or by (Great) Russians who do not have their roots in the region, "although sometimes even they inadvertently submit to the general influence" (хоть иногда и они невольно подчиняются общему влиянию). Rather, these "inaccuracies" can be traced to "foreigners" (*tuzemtsy* or *inorodtsy*), including Greeks, Germans, French, Italians, and other Slavs, to name just a subset (8). Dolopchev (1909, II) asserts that women and children make more mistakes because they study the standard language only superficially, read insufficiently, and because they spend more time speaking to the servants, who borrow regional words, incorrect phrases, and pronunciation. He too notes that there is considerable variation, with speakers in disagreement as to which form is correct (IV). Zelenetskii (1855, 9) singles out the Jewish population as playing no small role in these inaccuracies, identifying what, in modern terms, would be termed a linguistic substrate. But Zelenetskii does suggest that the "mistakes" in Russian of this region can be attributed in part to incomplete acquisition, arguing that it is spoken by this population of "foreigners" who have not fully mastered the language rather than Russians from other parts of the country. He further identifies contact effects as a source.

The area of modern-day Odessa has long been a contact region. As a major seaport, in the time period under consideration it was home to speakers of a vast number of different languages, including French, Italian, and German. Polish was a major lingua franca of all Western Ukraine during the Middle Ages, giving way to Russian by the mid-20th century (Stepanov 2004, 34). Odessa was settled by waves of Russians, many speakers of southern Russian dialects, whose speech was characterized by *akan´e* and use of the velar fricative for /g/. By the early 20th century, standard Russian became dominant

for Odessan Russians due to centralization and enforced use of the standard (Stepanov 2004, 24). Yiddish and Ukrainian are the key contributors to OdR, with Polish a distant third.

The demographic data for Odessa show why this would be the case. Just prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, the Jewish population was the largest non–Russian-speaking group in Odessa. In 1897 a full third of Odessa's population self-identified as speaking Yiddish:

Table 1. Linguistic make-up of Odessa, 1897 (Herlihy 1986, 242)

Native language (self-identified)	
Russian	51%
Yiddish	33%
Ukrainian	<6%

In 1892, Jews composed the second-largest part of the Odessan population (Zipperstein 2010),[3] having been attracted to the city where they enjoyed more rights than elsewhere in the Russian Empire. The first East European Yiddish newspaper, *Kol Mevaser* (The Herald), was published in 1862 in Odessa (Shneer 2004, 35). Many of the city's liberal officials supported Jewish education. While most Jewish schools of this era continued to provide instruction only in Yiddish, many Odessan Jewish schools offered languages such as Russian, German, and French (Zipperstein 1985, 46). Secular education for Jews was available not only for men but for women as well. Jews were even able to hold political positions on the municipal level (Zipperstein 2010). Although labor was initially divided according to nationality, with Jews dominating banking and other financial services, they soon became prominent in other spheres, such as medicine, trade, and industry. By the beginning of the 20th century, Jews controlled most of the grain exports from Odessa, half of the city's factories, and more than half of its smaller shops (Zipperstein 2010). In short, Odessan Jews were a major force in both the social and economic spheres.

The resulting Jewish community was on the whole more secular than elsewhere in Russia, and "manners and morals" were freer (Zipperstein 1985, 39). This secularization, combined with the cosmopolitan spirit of the city, allowed the Jews to travel in novel social circles. Though it was uncommon, it was not unheard of for Jews to socialize at elite Russian events (Zipperstein 1982, 34 n. 34). Secularization also contributed to the rise of many Jewish

---

[3] This has changed dramatically in the last century. According to the 1923 Soviet census, Jews constituted 44 percent of the population; by 2001, they accounted for only 1.2 percent (Mechkovskaia 2006, 266; Stepanov 2004, 22).

intellectuals who became involved in journalism and literature. Two of the city's three newspapers were operated by Jews and there were a number of Jewish publishing companies.

This freedom of Jews to participate in secular social life is linguistically significant and supports the hypothesis of a Yiddish substrate in OdR. Due to the high degree of intercultural contact in Odessa, Jews and other city residents became relatively proficient in one another's languages. In fact, the ability to navigate several languages was necessary to daily life, for Odessa itself was multilingual—monetary exchange rates were posted in Greek and street signs were in both Russian and Italian (Zipperstein 1985). There was also a widespread availability of media in different languages—there were a number of Yiddish newspapers, and performances at the city's opera house were staged in five languages. Less prestigious but no less frequented by Jews were local cabarets that performed Yiddish operas (Zipperstein 2010). Nevertheless, Russian—and not Ukrainian or any foreign language—was the city's primary language.

It is striking that Dolopchev does not specifically mention Jewish Odessans, because today the variety is very strongly associated with this sector. In fieldwork in Brighton Beach, people consistently and exclusively direct me to Jewish Odessans when asked who speaks it. This may reflect linguistic reality, but it is hard to imagine that only Jews spoke OdR. Thus it may reflect a cultural stereotype. By the same token it is clear that not all Jews in Odessa spoke this variety. Consultants report that it was very locally situated in certain neighborhoods, notably Moldavanka, the Jewish area of Odessa, but more specifically consultants report that actual speech patterns varied from courtyard to courtyard. These local language ecologies had their own specific way of speaking. Moreover, there are consultants who speak standard Russian and at most recognize some Odessan lexical items.

3. Variation in OdR

OdR is distinct from CSR in terms of phonology, the lexicon, morphology, and syntax. To verify what appear to be Odessanisms in literary texts, all have been checked in Dolopchev (1909) and in *Slovar′ russkikh narodnykh govorov* (Dictionary of Russian Folk Dialects [Filin 1965–2011]). In the larger corpus of OdR, examples from different authors are checked across different authors (e.g., I cross-referenced the features in Babel′'s version of OdR with the entries in Dolopchev's dictionary and with the examples of OdR in Zhabotinskii's *The Five* [*Piatero*]). For example, the derogatory word кацап 'Russian', occurring in Babel′ and Zhabotinskii, is attested in Dolopchev (1909) and in Smirnov's (2002) dictionary of OdR, and consultants in Brighton Beach report its use

although differ somewhat in their understanding of how widely it is used. (One speaker states it is used only in Odessa; another says its usage is broader; yet another defines it as a very specific term. All agree it is a Ukrainianism and considered very rude.) Clearly, this word was and is widely used. Other cases, however, are more ambiguous. The word баста 'enough' (< Italian *basta*) occurs twice in Zhabotinskii's *The Five* but is not attested elsewhere. It is impossible to determine whether the word was in widespread usage in Odessa, or if this was just an idiosyncratic nonce borrowing. A different example is provided by the conjunction бо 'because', a borrowing from Ukrainian (or Polish). It is widely used by a number of Odessan writers, including Babel´, but is not cited in Dolopchev (1909), as would be expected. In contrast, Babel´ does not use the conjunctions як 'as, how' or чи 'whether', although both of these are listed in Dolopchev. All three are attested by native speaker consultants and are characteristic of some varieties of OdR.

At the same time, there is remarkable inconsistency across authors, and there is little to no overlap across writers as to which features or forms of OdR they use. Moreover, there are discrepancies within the works of a single author, and even individual characters within one and the same story speak differently from one another; and sometimes an individual speaks differently at different times. Consider the verb (по)смеяться 'to laugh' (1) and (2) from the story "Father" ("Otets") by Babel´:

(1) Babel´ (2006, 88)

  – если хотите что-нибудь наблюдать из жизни, то зайдите к нам на двор, есть с чего посмеяться…
  '– if you want to see something from life, stop by our courtyard, there's something to laugh at…'

(2) Babel´ (2006, 91)

  – Человек, – сказал он, – неужели ты смеешься **надо мной**?
  '– Man, – he said, – are you really laughing at me?'

In example (1) the complement of the verb is in a non-standard form (the preposition с + the genitive case), while in (2) it shows the expected governance pattern (над + instrumental). The speaker in (1) is the watchman Evzel´, addressing Froim Grach, while in (2) it is Froim Grach speaking. The non-standard usage in (1) is noted in Dolopchev (1909, 255) with the examples Не смейся с бедных ["Don't laugh at poor people"] and Смеялись с того, что ты испугался ["They laughed at the fact that you were frightened"].

Cross-checking reveals a striking lack of correspondence across different authors of the same time period. For example, the reinterpretation of the spatial adverbs CSR куда ["whither"] and сюда ["to here"] as declinable nouns is claimed to be a feature of OdR, as noted by Doroshevich:

(3) Doroshevich (1895)

   Вы должны говорить «тудою» и «сюдою», чтобы не быть
   осмеянным, если скажете «туда» и «сюда».
   'You need to say "tudoiu" and "siudoiu" so as not to be laughed at, if
   you say "tuda" and "siuda."'

This use of тудою and сюдою is also attested in Dolopchev (1909, 282), by native speaker consultants, as well as in the works of several Odessan authors (e.g., Zhabotinskii 2007; Utesov 1976) but is not found in others (such as Karmen, Iushkevich, and Babel′), where the adverbs are used as in standard Russian.

The variation in literature almost certainly reflects the actual situation of the time. Not all features were used by all speakers of OdR at all times. Zelenetskii (1855, 11) is clear on this point, noting that "it is not possible to enumerate all the errors and inaccuracies because they occur, to a greater or lesser degree, in different places or among different people and, moreover, in the most diverse way" (трудно исчислить все погрешности и неправильности, потому что, в разных местах и у разных лиц, встречаются они в бóльшей или в меньшей мере и притом в самом разнообразном виде). Dolopchev (1909) does not explicitly discuss variation but provides independent evidence of it. He cites different variants for gender, stress patterns, lexical items, and morphology. Unfortunately he gives no information as to who uses which variants in which circumstances. Based on these two sources, it appears that OdR features were not used by all speakers all of the time, by all speakers some of the time, or by some speakers all of the time. Rather, they are used by at least some speakers some of the time. Many are not unique to OdR; some are typical of other southern Russian dialects, and some are typical to other Jewish-Russian varieties.

Nonetheless, the use of OdR in literature indexes the (fictional) speaker's identity, an identity which is at once both Odessan and Jewish in the present corpus. This is a key point about the features of OdR: they are sufficiently salient to distinguish OdR from CSR in such a way that they can be seen as characteristic or even stereotypical of OdR. Simply using one or a set of features is sufficient to invoke OdR. (See also Scherr 2011, 100–03, who points out that the use of OdR in Zhabotinskii is by no means arbitrary; rather it indexes both Odessa as a place and a specifically Odessan Jewish identity.)

Variation in how OdR is represented in differing fictional works can be explained by a combination of diglossia, social network theory (Milroy 1987, 2002), and literary dialect (section 4). OdR is best understood as reflecting a diglossic situation, with Odessan Russian as the low-prestige variety and Standard Russian the high prestige variety, both located on the ends of a diglossic continuum (Ferguson 1959). Speakers could be in command of the varieties on either end of the continuum and thus able to switch from one to another, adjusting their speech according to their interlocutor, register, and setting. A simple illustration is found in examples (1) and (2), where the watchman in (1) uses more Odessan-like features while the speaker in (2) more standard. Similarly, in Babel′'s *Odessan Stories*, Benia Krik quite famously uses the verb "to have" when addressing the messenger (who himself uses it as in [4] below), but not elsewhere when he speaks standard Russian.

4. Literary Dialect

Dialogue as represented in the literary texts provides some evidence for what actual speech was like. Following Ives (1971, 146) literary dialect is defined as "an author's attempt to represent in writing a speech that is restricted regionally, socially, or both." In the introduction to their volume on the use of nonstandard English in literature, Taavitsainen and Melchers (1999, 13) note that nonstandard forms occur most frequently in dialogue in fiction. Such features are used to signal character traits or social or regional differences; they are often used for humorous effect. Moreover, such depictions are more common for lower or rural classes than for higher classes, who are generally portrayed as speaking the standard (with some exceptions).

There are obvious methodological problems with relying on writings in literary dialect for linguistic data. The speech is constructed, not spontaneous conversation. One fundamental difference between written and oral language is that in the former, writers can go back and edit the text. Where spontaneous speech is concerned, there is no such editing process: false starts, hesitations, unfinished sentences, pauses, and so on are all part of the text; in linguistics, and in particular in the subfield of Conversation Analysis, such "mistakes" are an important part of the data. Writers, however, are not linguists; they create dialect or non-standard speech for artistic purposes, and their creations are not linguistic transcripts. As Ives (1971, 147) points out, "[T]he author is an artist, not a linguist or sociologist, and his purpose is literary rather than scientific." Where they try to capture the sound system of a dialect, they do so by using idiosyncratic spelling to signal the sounds. But phonological analyses based on spelling are problematic without phonetic transcription. As a concrete example, Trudgill (1999, 323–24) points to the debate in Norfolk

about whether the local pronunciation of *beautiful* should be written *bewtiful* or *bootiful*. Only the second spelling accurately portrays the yod-deletion characteristic of this dialect that is very salient to outsiders, but insiders are more likely to write *bewtiful*; yod-dropping is not a salient feature for them. Trudgill explains this by arguing that dialect features that are in the process of being lost are more salient to writers than those that are robust. Regardless of the explanation, this shows that speakers of a dialect are not necessarily accurate in representing actual speech sounds. There is no guarantee that a writer's reproduction of non-standard features is accurate.

Where we have independent information about dialects, their usage can be readily checked. This is the case for a number of English writers. For example, in a study which compared Tennyson's dialect poems from *Northern Farmer: New Style* to actual sound recordings in the early nineteenth century, Wilson (1973) shows a mismatch in pronunciation. In Ives's classic study of literary dialect in American fiction, he had access to Hans Kurath's fieldnotes (1971, 148 fn. 2). Where there is no other valuable documentation, the literature (or more precisely, fiction) may be the best documentation.

For OdR, however, literary dialect may well be the best record of the variety as it was actually spoken. Doroshevich's famous lecture on the language of Odessa (1895) is a prime example of literary dialect. He cites what are clearly fabricated conversations, presenting them as representative of actual OdR and, in the conclusion of the lecture, slips into what is purported to be OdR, presenting it as actual speech. None of these are genuine conversations. While some of the phrases Doroshevich uses can be found in some of the Odessan writers, there is inconsistency among them as to how they are used. There are three different techniques for representing Odessan Russian in literature: *selective reproduction, explicit attribution,* and *verbal transposition*. These terms are taken from Sternberg's (1981) model of polylingualism and translation as mimesis. (Poussa 1999 provides similar arguments for the use of literary texts and dialect.) Each of these three techniques can be illustrated with reference to a single Odessan author: Babel´ for selective reproduction; Zhabotinskii for explicit attribution; and Iushkevich for verbal transposition. Sternberg's model does much to explain the differences in the use of OdR in each of these author's writings: each author uses a different technique to invoke a particular character's Jewish identity.

1. Selective Reproduction

Some but not all features of the dialect are represented; they do not interfere with the reading of the text. "It [selective reproduction, *LAG*] does not necessarily require or presuppose bilingual competence on the reader's part"

(Sternberg 1981, 226). Rather, they are used selectively, so that the reader can reconstruct their meaning through context, or so that their meaning is transparent to speakers of the standard language even though the features themselves are not standard. This technique is exemplified by Babel´, who uses such features as Jewish personal names (e.g., Арье-Лейб ["Ar'e Leib"], *Эйхбаум* ["Èikhbaum'"]; these sometimes occur in stereotypical Odessan titles, such as Мосье Эйхбаум ["Monsieur Èikhbaum"] or Мадам Шнейвейс ["Madame Shneiveis"], both reflecting the use of French titles long after they had ceased to be used in the rest of Russia (a point used by Doroshevich 1985 in mimicking OdR). Yiddish words are used only for cultural or religious items, invoking a Jewish identity. Yiddish-like syntax with Russian words has famously come down to us from Babel's story "The King" ("Korol´"), as seen in (4):

(4)   Babel´ (2006, 60)

Я имею вам сказать пару слов.
'I have to say a few words to you.'

Note that the actual source of the use of the verb иметь 'to have' is not entirely clear. Its use in OdR is probably a calque from Yiddish but is further supported by Ukrainian and Polish, which also use a "have" verb.

One typical feature of OdR is the extensive use of Ukrainian prepositions. Babel´ makes use of this feature quite frequently in his portrayal of OdR, as in (5):

(5)   Babel´ (2006, 61)

Что сказать тете Хане? Скажи: Беня знает за облаву.
'What should I tell Auntie Khana? Say: Benia knows about the raid.'

Here the preposition за is used with the accusative case instead of the expected *о* with the prepositional case. The intended meaning is still transparent and so this "error" does not interfere with interpretation.

Example (6) illustrates the use of several Odessan features in one sentence: lexical items include the noun биндюг ["cart"] and the verb лупцовать ["to beat"]; the coordinator 'because' could be seen as lexical or morphosyntactic; and morphological сыны [syny] ["sons"] (standard сыновья [synov´ia]) and the verb хочут [khochut] (standard хотят [xotiat]) ["they want"].

(6) Babel´ (2006, 114)

Заворачивайте биндюг, дяденька Крик, бо сыны ваши хочут лупцовать вас…
'Turn your cart, Uncle Krik, because your sons want to beat you.'

Despite the fact that half the forms in this excerpt are not standard, it is completely understandable (the meaning of the words for "cart" and "to beat" being derivable from context).

In much the same way, Babel´ uses phraseology and certain morphosyntactic features strongly associated with Odessa, such as the overuse (or "abuse") of the genitive case which is seen as typical of OdR (Cukierman 1980, 38), as in (7):

(7) Babel' (2006, 163)

Пусть вас не волнует **этих глупостей**.
'Don't let these silly things$_{GEN}$ bother you.'

These particular non-standard features are stereotypically associated with OdR. Many of them very clearly invoke a Jewish identity. Some of these are quite obvious (the use of Yiddish names, words, or syntax), others less explicit, but note that even the use of the genitive case in (7) indexes Jewish characteristics. As Rothstein (2001, 783) notes, "Odessans are criticized as misusing cases, and that is sometimes blamed, explicitly or implicitly, on the influence of Yiddish, where the case system is much less developed than in Russian."

Such misuse of case was so widely associated with Odessa that Eduard Bagritskii jokingly used the genitive instead of the accusative in his letters to friends:

(8) Shishkova (1973, 69), quoting a letter from Bagritskii:

Надо писать **стихов**. Надо мыть рук и чистить зуб!
'[You] have to write verses$_{GEN.PL}$. You have to wash your hands$_{GEN.PL}$ and brush your teeth$_{GEN.PL}$!'

Bagritskii's jocular use of the genitive here is illustrative of a key point about the features of OdR: these differences are sufficiently salient to distinguish OdR from standard Russian in such a way that they can be seen as characteristic or even stereotypical of OdR. Simply using one or a set of features is sufficient to invoke OdR.

2. *Explicit Attribution*

Use of the dialect forms includes meta-statements about their meaning, i.e., a "direct statement in the reporter's (or even the reportee's) part concerning the language" (Sternberg 1981, 231). Zhabotinskii's use of language in *The Five* exemplifies explicit attribution; the omniscient narrator regularly explains what other characters are saying. This is necessary because Zhabotinskii's use of OdR lexicon and morphosyntax results in a language incomprehensible to readers not conversant in OdR.

For example, in (9) the narrator not only defines the Odessanism, but embeds the definition in a meta-commentary about linguistics. In (10), the use of non-standard воны ушедши 'he's left' is directly followed by an explanation. Both cases are typical of Zhabotinskii's use of OdR: the Odessanisms occur in the direct speech of individual characters and the multilingual narrator, fluent in both the standard and Odessan varieties.

(9)　Zhabotinskii (*The Five*, online edition)

– Оттого и беспорядок, Чубчик! Его и другие рыбаки все за **босявку держут**.
[…]

　　Я радостно поднял голову. *Лингвистика всегда была подлинной страстью моей жизни;* […] «Держут за босявку». Прелесть! **«Держут» значит считают**. А босявка – это и перевести немыслимо; в одном слове целая энциклопедия неодобрительных отзывов.

'That's why there's such disorder, Chubchik! Even the other fishermen say he's a deadbeat.'
[…]

　　'I looked up with delight. Linguistics had always been the genuine passion of my life; […] "Say he's a deadbeat." **"Derzhut" means consider**. "Deadbeat" [bosiavka]—there's no point trying to translate it: the word contains a veritable encyclopedia of disapproving judgments.'

　　　　　　　　　　　(translation adapted from Jabotinsky/Katz 2005, 8)

(10)　a.　Zhabotinskii (*The Five*, online edition)

– Фомы Гаврилыча нема: воны ушедши.
'Foma Gavrilovich is not here: he left.'

This is followed by an explanation:

(10) b. Я даже не сразу понял, о ком она говорит; особенно потрясло
          меня деепричастие вместо простого прошедшего. Мотря, до
          нас служившая у генерала, точно соблюдала эти глагольные
          тонкости и всегда оттеняла, что прачка «ушла», а барыня –
          ушедши. Я смутно ощутил, что в общественном положении
          нашего дворника совершается какой-то процесс возвышения.

          'I didn't even understand right away who she was talking
          about; I was especially struck by the use of the converb instead
          of the simple past. Motrja, who before us had worked for a
          general, precisely observed these verbal subtleties and always
          distinguished that the laundress "ushla" [past tense] and the
          mistress ushedshi [converb]. I vaguely felt that some kind of
          process of elevation was going on in the social position of our
          porter.'

The detailed commentary here not only explains the meaning to the reader
but explicitly notes the class differences the two different verb forms index.

3. Verbal transposition, or devised translational interference

In this mode the writer portrays the speech of Yiddish-speaking characters
as if they were speaking Yiddish, but represents it in the language used for
writing, in this case Russian. In the case of Odessan writers, this technique
goes beyond relexification (a substitution of Russian lexical items for Yid-
dish words) to a reframing of grammar, with Yiddish syntax instead of
Russian. Linguists often refer to this phenomenon on the part of speakers
as *interference*: the speaker's first language interferes with his/her second. In
literary dialect it is of course deliberate and thus devised: "[i]t is not so much
a literal reproduction of substance as a stylized mimesis of form" (Sternberg
1981, 228). Fischer (2009, 174) notes this phenomenon in Jewish-American
literature, where the Yiddish speech is "translated" into English, "but not
into immaculate idiomatic English, but English that contains a few Yiddish
elements to remind the reader of the source language."

A prime example of the use of devised translational interference in OdR
is found in Iushkevich: the writer gives reported speech of Yiddish-speaking
characters as if they were speaking Yiddish, but in Russian. His use of language
goes beyond relexification to a word-by-word translation so that his characters
speak Russian using Yiddish syntax; the phrasing and semantic content mimic
what the speech would be if it were in Yiddish. Cukierman (1980, 37) makes
a similar point, arguing that "the suggestion of the articulation, accents and

melodiousness of voice makes the speech of Iushkevich's characters sound exotic to the Russian ear." This is seen in (11), a single passage divided into lines here for analysis, with a loose English translation that attempts to capture the style of the Russian original:

(11)   Iushkevich (2004, 52–53)

Не спешите, и слушайте дальше.	Don't hurry but listen further.
Кто я, и что я?	Who am I, and what am I?
Что я имею, где имею, и когда имею,	What do I have, where do I have it, and when,
если живу в одной полутемной комнате с тремя детьми,	if I live in a single dark room with three children,
и где сам Бог велел,	and where it just had to be God's will
чтобы со стен текло.	that the walls are dripping.
Сама болею, может быть, сотнею болезней, и самых различных.	And I am suffering, maybe, from a hundred of the most diverse diseases.
Что хотите,	Whatever you want,
то у меня найдете.	you'll find I have it.
Если в голове жужжит, то,	If my head is buzzing,
думаете, что в боку не колет?	do you think my side is not stabbing?
Как раз, вы угадали!	You have guessed right!
И жужжит и режет,	And it buzzes and cuts,
и ломит и колет,	and aches and stabs,
и рвет и сверлит,	and sickens and jabs,
где только хотите.	wherever you want.
Я бы, кажется, одна могла занять целую больницу…	I could, all by myself, occupy an entire hospital…
Все доктора мучились бы со мной,	All the doctors would be forever busy with me,
и все-таки никто никогда не узнал бы,	and still no one would never learn
что за болезнь у меня.	what I have.

(Line numbers in margin: 5, 10, 15, 20)

This excerpt does not include typical OdR expressions, with the exception of the use of the verb иметь ["to have"] in line 3. The language is very fluent, there are no hesitations here, and the lexicon is solidly Russian, not Yiddish or Ukrainian. And yet it sounds very much like Yiddish. Levinson (1927, 83) says of Iushkevich that "he wrote in a language in which no one else wrote, although tens, even hundreds, of thousands of Russian Jews used it to communicate. And it is their truth that could not be fully expressed without

mimicking their spoken language" (он писал на языке, на котором никто иной не писал, хотя на нем и изъяснялись десятки, а то и сотни тысяч русских евреев. Их то правду и нельзя было выразить до конца, не вторя их живой речи). The passage portrays the woman kvetching (Wex 2005) with an entire litany of complaints about unnamed ailments (lines 13–15) as if she were speaking Yiddish, but in Russian.

5. Conclusion

Odessan Russian, as portrayed in the literary works of a core set of Odessan authors writing from the late 19th century until the outbreak of World War II, is a sociolect that is strongly identified with Jewish Odessans. The features of this variety are sufficiently salient to index that Jewish identity. Close reading of Odessan literature shows variation in the use of OdR across authors and across characters in individual works. Moreover, no works are written entirely in OdR; and some have very few features although they invoke a marked Jewish identity for some characters. At the same time, there is some inconsistency between the Odessanisms used by writers and those found in extant dictionaries and descriptions.

The present article has briefly demonstrated that the variation among characters in the same story or novel reflects variation in actual speech patterns: different speakers use different varieties and may vary between OdR and the standard language depending on whom they are talking to and the circumstances in which they are speaking. Variation across authors reflects different techniques in the writing of literary dialect, all of which are designed to index the identity of the speaker through his or her speech patterns.

References

Babel′, Isaak. 2006. *Odesskie rasskazy.* In *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, edited by I. N. Sukhikh, 1: 60–150. Moscow: Vremia.

Barannik, L. F. et al. 1982. "Slovar' russkikh govorov Odesskoi oblasti." In *Russkie govory na Ukraine*, edited by O. N. Tobilevich, 181–212. Kiev: Naukova dumka.

Cukierman, Waleny. 1980. "The Odessan Myth and Idiom in Some Early Works of Odessa Writers." *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 14 (1): 36–51.

Dem′yanova, L. I. 1987. "Tipologiia ukraïns′kikh ekspresivnikh zapozichen′ u rosiïs′kikh govirkakh odeshchini." *Movoznavstvo* 21 (4) (124): 67–69.

Dem′yanova, L. I., N. V. Poteryaiko, and V. N. Titikalo. 1989. "Ukraïn′skiĭ vpliv na ekspresivnu leksiku rosiïs′kikh govirok pivdnia Ukraïni." *Movoznavstvo* 23 (2) (134): 46–49.

Dolopchev, V. 1909. *Opyt slovaria nepravil′nostei v russkoi razgovornoi rechi*. 2nd ed. Warsaw: Tip. K. Kovalevskogo.

Doroshevich, Vlas. 1895. "Odesskii iazyk." In *Odessa, odessity i odessitki: Ocherki, nabroski, eskizy*, 48–61. Odessa: Izdanie Iu. Sandomirskogo.

Ferguson, Charles. 1959. "Diglossia." *Word* 15: 325–40.

Filin, N. M. 1965–2011. *Slovar′ russkikh narodnykh govorov*. Moscow–Leningrad/ St. Petersburg: Nauka.

Fischer, Pavel. 2009. "Linguistic Discussions of Jewish-American Literature." In *Transcultural English Studies: Theories, Fictions, Realities*, edited by Frank Schulze-Engler and Sissy Helff, 169–85. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Grenoble, Lenore, and Jessica Kantarovich. "The Curious Case of Odessan Russian" (unpublished manuscript).

Herlihy, Patricia. 1986. *Odessa: A History, 1794–1914*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Himmelmann, Nikolaus P. 2005. "Language Documentation: What Is It and What Is It Good for?" In *Essentials of Language Documentation*, edited by Jost Gippert, Nikolaus P. Himmelmann, and Ulrike Mosel, 1–30. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

———. 1998. "Documentary and Descriptive Linguistics." *Linguistics* 36: 161–95.

Iushkevich, S. S. 2004. *Evreiskoe schast′e*. St. Petersburg: Severo-Zapad Press.

Ives, Sumner. 1971. "A Theory of Literary Dialect." In *A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects*, edited by Juanita V. Williamson and Virginia M. Burke, 145–77. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Jabotinsky, Vladimir. 2005. *The Five: A Novel of Jewish Life in Turn-of-the-Century Odessa*. Translated by Michael R. Katz. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Levinson, Andrei. 1927. "O nekotorykh chertakh tvorchestva S. S. Iushkevicha." In S. Iushkevich, *Posmertnye proizvedeniia, 83–95. Paris: Imprimerie d'Art Voltaire*.

Mechkovskaia, Nina Borisovna. 2006. "Russkii iazyk v Odesse: Vchera, segodnia, zavtra." Review of *Rosiĭs′ke movlennia Odesi: Monografiia*, by Ie. M. Stepanov. *Russian Linguistics* 30 (2): 263–81.

Milroy, Leslie. 1987. *Language and Social Networks*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

———. "Social Networks." In *The Handbook of Language Change and Variation*, edited by J. K. Chambers, P. Trudgill, and N. Schilling-Estes, 549–72. Oxford: Blackwell.

Nikolich, I. M. 1877. "Nepravil′nosti v vyrazheniiakh, dopuskaemye v pechati." *Uchenye zapiski* 1: 1–18.

Poussa, Patricia. 1999. "Dickens as Sociolinguist: Dialect in *David Copperfield*." In Taavitsainen, Melchers, and Pahta 1999, 27–44.

Rothstein, Robert. 2001. "How It Was Sung in Odessa: At the Intersection of Russian and Yiddish Folk Culture." *Slavic Review* 60 (4): 781–801.

Scherr, Barry P. 2011. "An Odessa Odyssey: Vladimir Jabotinsky's *The Five*." *Slavic Review* 70 (1): 94–115.

Shishkova, Zinaida. 1973. *Eduard Bagritskii: Vospominaniia sovremennikov*. Edited by L. G. Bagritskaia. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel′.

Shishov, V. F., and A. A. Stetsiuchenko. 1991. "Odessizmy v rasskazakh I. E. Babelia." In *Iazyk i stil′ proizvedenii I. E. Babelia, Iu. K. Oleshi, I. A. Il′fa i E. P. Petrova*, edited by Iu. A. Karpenko, 28–34. Kiev: Uchebno-metodicheskii kabinet po vysshemu obrazovaniiu.

Shneer, David. 2004. *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smirnov, V. P. 2002. *Bol′shoi polutolkovyi slovar′ odesskogo iazyka*. Odessa: Akademiia nauk.

Stetsiuchenko, Aleksei, and Aleksandr Ostashko. 1999. *Samouchitel′ poluzhivogo odesskogo iazyka*. Moscow: Novoe vremia.

Stepanov, Ie. M. 2004. *Rosiĭs′ke movlennia Odesi: Monografiia*. Odessa: Odessa National University im. I. I. Mechnykova.

Sternberg, Meir. 1981. "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis." *Poetics Today* 2 (4): 221–39.

Taavitsainen, Irma, Gunnel Melchers, and Paiva Pahta, eds. 1999. *Writing in Nonstandard English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Taavitsainen, Irma, and Gunnel Melchers. 1999. "Writing in Nonstandard English: Introduction." In Taavitsainen, Melchers, and Pahta 1999, 1–26.

Trudgill, Peter. 1999. "Dedialectalisation and Norfolk Dialect Orthography." In Taavitsainen, Melchers, and Pahta 1999, 323–29.

Verbitskaia, L. A., M. V. Gordina, and L. E. Kukolshchikova. 1986. "Differentsiatsiia zvukovoi storony russkogo iazyka v usloviiakh rus-

skogo ukrainskogo dvuiazychiia." *Vestnik Leningradskogo universiteta: Istoriia-iazyk-literatura* 41 (2): 53–57.

Wex, Michael. 2005. *Born to Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All Its Moods*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Wilson, H. Rex. 1973. "Dialect Literature: A Two-Way Street?" *The Canadian Journal of Linguistics/La Revue canadienne de Linguistique* 18 (2): 157–62.

Zelenetskii, K. 1855. *O russkom iazyke v novorossiiskom krae*. Odessa: Odesskii uchebnyi okrug.

Zhabotinskii, V. E. 1930. "Moia stolitsa." In *Causeries. Pravda ob ostrove. Tristan da-Run´ia*, 75–85. Paris: Tipografiia Voltaire.

Zipperstein, Steven J. 1982. "Jewish Enlightenment in Odessa: Cultural Characteristics 1794–1871." *Jewish Social Studies* 44 (1): 19–36.

———. 1985. *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———. 2010. "Odessa." In *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. YIVO Institute for Research, 2010. http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article. aspx/Odessa.

Zybatow, Lew N. 1997. "Alte slavische Mehrsprachigkeitsorte Europas im neuen sozio- und kontaktlinguistischen Licht." *Sociolinguistica* 11: 130–41.