Specificities of the Slang Habal'stvo in the Discourse of Ukrainian Homosexuals

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Abstract

      In this work investigation has been carried out to reveal linguistic and circumstantial specificities of the slang *habal'stvo* that is used by gay men in order to index their *feminine* homosexual status within gay community of practice in the capital of Ukraine – Kyiv. In the research of a language variation in relation to sexuality the following hypothesis is developed: the Russian dialect *habal'stvo* is a communicative resource used by Ukrainian homosexuals that serves to index through language use the belonging of an individual to the gay community of practice. *Habal'stvo* is not a homogeneous language of homosexuals but a particular case of codeswitching that aims to signal man's *feminine* homosexual status.

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Acknowledgments

Thanks for my family who believes in me all the time…

I cordially devote this work to a person who inspired me to apply for the Department of Gender Studies in the Central European University; who withstood our endless disputes regarding the intricate way of the society is constructed and sophisticated relationships between individuals; who supported and encouraged me whatever happened during this year; who patiently stayed with me at home on the sunny weekends in the spring because I had to write this work; who refreshed me with tea and delicious strawberry cakes; finally, who made me believe that I can do it...

Thank you, my sweetheart!

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Dear Zsazsa thank you for directing me in the reaches of academic literature regarding my topic and providing me with so detailed and helpful advices.

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Introduction

In the thesis I investigate linguistic and circumstantial specificities of the slang *habal'stvo* that is used by gay men in order to index their *feminine* homosexual status within gay community of practice.

In the research of a language variation in relation to sexuality my hypothesis is: the Russian dialect *habal'stvo* is a communicative resource used by Ukrainian homosexuals that serves to index through language use the belonging of an individual to the gay community of practice. I will explore *habal'stvo* not as a homogeneous language of homosexuals but rather as a particular case of codeswitching that aims to signal man's *feminine* homosexual status.

This research is important because it will fill a gap in the field of linguistics, as there is no research on the relation between language and sexuality in linguistics in Ukraine.

The aim of my research is to explore linguistic specificities (grammar, lexicon, intonation), context (situations, interactants), and functional distribution (purposes, intentions) of using *habal'stvo* among homosexual communities in Kyiv. In other words, my agenda is to reveal the current linguistic environment of those sexual minorities in Kyiv who use this codeswitching in order to signal their membership in gay community of practice.

The data for my research will come from the questionnaires and interviews, as the slang *habal'stvo* has not been researched yet. In order to validate my hypothesis I will analyze the language variation *habal'stvo* from sociolinguistic approach from two perspectives. The first set of data (questionnaire) will be analyzed in order to reveal explicitly articulated linguistic specificities of the spoken slang *habal'stvo* (lexicon, terms, expressions, grammar). The second set of data (interviews) will be analyzed in order to reveal the implicit discourse of communication (interactants, circumstances, purposes).

This thesis aims to draw more scientific focus to the interrelated issues of language and sexuality in Ukrainian gay community of practice.

Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework

This chapter seeks to introduce theoretical grounding for my researching of a language variation in relation to sexuality. More importantly, it aims to provide theoretical tools for validating my hypothesis, which is the following. The Russian dialect *habal'stvo* is a communicative resource used by Ukrainian homosexuals that serves to index through language use the belonging of an individual to the gay community of practice. *Habal'stvo* will be explored here not as a 'language of homosexuality' but rather as a particular case of codeswitching that aims to signal an individual's *feminine* homosexual status.

Based on the hypothesis above, I will develop further arguments with regards to the subject. It is a commonplace perception that two types of homosexuals can be distinguished – masculine and feminine ones. They are feminine homosexuals who tend to use *habal'stvo* and not masculine ones. Masculine homosexuals resign the idea of using this slang due to the mere fact that it carries the attributes of femininity. Owing to the expressive and artistic nature of *habal'stvo*, the feminine homosexuals are more easily noticed and judged by the heterosexual community. As a result, the whole of homosexual community is perceived by the heterosexual one mainly on the basis of these feminine *habal-users*.

In the present chapter I will discuss two main approaches in the study of language and sexuality: the sociolinguistic and the performative ones. Further on, I will situate my research in the sociolinguistic tradition and provide the main reasons for my choice. The next step will be to consider in detail sociolinguistic approach. I will discuss two possible ways of doing research in the frame of this approach. Finally, I will introduce the major concepts my research draws on, namely: identity, community of practice/membership, and codeswitching.

1.1. Two approaches in the study of language and sexuality.

Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick (2003) have a study that looks at the major tendencies of the existing approaches to language use and sexuality in the field of linguistics. According to them (2003, 74-78), until now in linguistics there are two major approaches. Sexuality could be accepted by the researcher as given and one could analyze the specificities of the language variations used by homosexual subjects (sociolinguistic approach), and see language usage as an actual expression of their actual orientation. Sexuality could be seen, partly, as a matter of linguistic accomplishment and then the analysis is concentrated with the enactments of sexuality through language use (performative approach). The authors look at both approaches in linguistics and look at their theoretical grounds.

Cameron and Kulick suggest using the performative approach in the studies of language and sexuality rather than the traditional sociolinguistic approach, as the first one allows them to go beyond the concept of identity and to make analysis through the concept of 'desire' (or such dimensions of sexual experience, as: fantasy, repression, pleasure, fear, and the unconscious). As far as the concept of 'identity' seeks to generalize and to label everyone with some common category, it fails to convey the individuality of every personality. Performative approach enables linguistics to side-step 'identity' because the analysis is focused not on the verbal presentation of the fixed "self" but on the sexuality as relational and transitive action. Since everyone experience their sexual desires as uniquely personal and intensely private and all their desires are coded into language, performative approach reveals how desire of an individual is materialized through her/his language. (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 74-133)

Partially, I agree with Cameron and Kulick's ideas. I also believe that it is too narrow-minded position to explore language only within a fixed framework of sexuality as an independent variable. At the same time I also believe that it is too vague to do an analysis about sexuality based only on the psychologically defined concept of 'desire'. Moreover,

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regarding the lack of time for doing a research, I would not be able to do a deep performative analysis of the slang *habal'stvo* as that would require an extensive period of fieldwork. It could be prospects for the future research. There has not been any research regarding the Russian language and sexuality focusing at the linguistic research done about other languages. It seems inevitable to establish the specificities of a given language variation first, before following the performative approach, as the latter needs the linguistic specificities that can be established only with the help of the exploration of the specificities of the given language variation, which is to be delivered by the sociolinguistic approach.

In the regard of sociolinguistic approach, I refer to William L. Leap (2002, 129-134) who outline the history of lesbian and gay linguistic anthropology. Leap writes about two trends in the sociolinguistic approach. The author states that till the late 1960s scholars draw attention to lexical usage of lesbian and gay coded language. They focus on vocabulary and explore the symbolic values and benefits of expressing homosexual meanings through coded language. Scholars of the late 1960s did not explore the cultural implications of their lexical material, social settings, and other details of context that were relevant to its usage. Only by the end of the 1970s was there an interest in connecting language and context. Such scholars as Julia Penelope [Stanley] (1975, 1982, 1986), Edward William Delph (1978), Stephen O. Murray (1979), Deborah Tannen (1984), James W. Chesebro (1981), etc. were engaged in exploring situational homosexual verbal processes. Thus my research is done in accordance to the latest trends in sociolinguistics, i. e. I will explore the verbal performance taking into consideration the social and the circumstantial context of *habal'stvo,* as well as the purposes of its usage.

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1.2. The sociolinguistic approach: linguistic specificities and discourse of communication.

I share Kulick's (2000, 247) claim that there is no such thing as 'homogeneous authentic homosexual language' that is valid for all homosexuals. Thus I will explore the slang *habal'stvo* in the context of codeswitching used only by those individuals who intend – explicitly and/or implicitly – to signal their belonging to the gay community in Ukraine. I suppose that the usage and knowledge of *habal'stvo* varies in different areas of the country and among different homosexuals. My aim is to research *habal'stvo* particularly in Kyiv – the capital of Ukraine – because people are more open there regarding one's sexual orientation, thus it is more likely that there are open gay companies that communicate using the language variety. Also there are a number of LGBT organizations, such as: Ukrainian Charitable Organization "*Time of Life Plus*" (http://tl-plus.org.ua/), Non-governmental Organization "Gay-Alliance" (http://ga.net.ua), Ukrainian Non-governmental Organization "Gay-Forum of Ukraine" (http://www.lgbtua.com), etc. People who work there have possibility to help to get in touch with potential interviewees.

My research will be done from two perspectives. On the one hand, in order to create a bulk of the research on *habal'stvo*, I will identify linguistic specificities of this slang, such as grammar, vocabulary, idioms, intonation, etc. Most research analyzing codeswitching is based on these linguistic features (Livia and Hall 1997, 4). For example, in 1963 Cory and LeRoy compiled gay lexicon "A Lexicon of Homosexual Slang", in 1964 Strait and Associates wrote a glossary "The Lavender Lexicon: Dictionary of Gay Words and Phrases", in 1972 Rodgers created "The Queens' Vernacular", and in the same year Farrel finished "the Argot of Homosexual Subculture". For all these works the topic was studying the linguistic level of gay speech from phonology and phonetics to morphosyntax, semantics, and lexicon.

On the other hand, I believe that *habal'stvo* cannot be defined simply by a list of structural features. That is why the concept of agency should also be considered and explored.

I do agree with Kulick (2000, 258) that despite the groundbreaking works done in the field of homosexual linguistics in the 1960s and in the 1970s that dealt mainly with vocabulary, there were also steps toward analyzing the vocabulary in the frame of social and political relations. Thus scholars explored language variations used by homosexuals as a linguistic code. For example, Chesebro's "Gayspeak: Gay Male and Lesbian Communication" (1981) deals with the issues of rhetoric and communication rather than linguistic form as such; likewise, Ronald Ringer's "Queer Words, Queer Images: Communication and the Construction of Homosexuality" (1994) concentrates on rhetoric and communication and on media images of gays and lesbians and the process of coming out.

Hence, in the thesis I will also analyze the phenomenon of *habal'stvo* among urban Ukrainian gay communities from the point of view of their fixed sexual identities through seeing how they index their identity – explicitly and implicitly – through using this particular slang in different discourses. At this point I would like to mention that I do realize that the concept of identity is quite essentialist by its understanding and perception. Identity is used to be accepted by most linguists as an unproblematic category and the one from which social relations can be derived (Livia and Hall 1997, 6). Contemporary scholars seek to shift from the traditional concept of identity. Still, in this research I do not wish to argue about the relevance or scientific validity of the 'identity' but follow the traditional sociolinguistic approach, i. e. I take sexual identity of the individual as given and assume that one may identify himself as gay through codeswitching – using the slang variation *habal'stvo* in the context of the standard variation of the language.

Anna Livia and Kira Hall's book "Queerly Phrased" (1997) will also serve as the theoretical grounds for my choice of the sociolinguistic approach. The authors deal with three tendencies in researching language and sexual orientation, thus their book is divided into three main parts: liminal lexicality, queerspeak, and linguistic gender-bending. In my research I will

refer to first two of them. The first one concerns only lexical items of alternative sexual identities. The authors present researches of terms in different languages used by both in-group members of homosexual community and outsiders, such as Renaissance French and English, present day Japanese, Yiddish, Polari, and American sign language. I used this set of articles while searching for the methods of obtaining data and ways of further lexical analysis of *habal'stvo*.

The second part in Livia and Hall's work is queerspeak. It deals with homosexual discourse strategies. The key point of this second set of articles in the volume is to argue that certain types of speech that is labeled as homosexual by its usage should be considered also from the perspectives of cultural, contextual, and textual networks. Thus the authors present articles that take into consideration speaker's intent when analyzing their data. I will draw on these articles when doing my analysis of *habal'stvo* regarding "implication, inference, and presupposition that reveal a speaker's stance within the territories of various social discourses" (Moonwomon-Baird 1997, 203).

To sum up the above written, I will follow the traditional sociolinguistic approach in the studying of language in connection with sexuality. However, I will not explore the slang *habal'stvo* only from the perspective of vocabulary and intonation because it allows revealing the formal linguistic specificities of the slang but not the driving forces behind it, i. e. the purposes and circumstances of its usage. In fact, *habal'stvo* is a very dynamic slang and it would be wrong to research it only from the perspective of vocabulary and intonation because there is no static unchangeable lexicon. Thus, in order to research *habal'stvo* with regard to casual relations, I will also explore it in terms of its contextualized codeswitching. For that I shall have to discuss codeswitching as a linguistic act that signals speaker's membership, and hence identity in a given linguistic community of practice.

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1.3. The concept of identity.

First of all, while exploring the interaction of language and society, I will refer to Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall (2005, 586) who give more or less broad definition of identity: "Identity is a social positioning of self and other." In their work the authors do not take identity as something that can emerge at a single analytic level, but as something that operates at multiple levels simultaneously. In spite the fact that their work is aimed mostly at arguing for identity as a discursive construct that emerges in interaction with others (performative approach), their perception of identity is still relevant for my arguments, since I perceive identity as the reason why people avail themselves of using or/and not using particular variety of language code in certain circumstances. Thus through their language choice individuals demonstrate their stance in the society and that can in fact lead to the accomplishment of their 'identity' emerging as an effect of codeswitching.

Another useful work in the understanding of 'identity' is Bucholtz and Hall's *Language and Identity* (2003). The authors discuss the concept of identity through two perspectives: sameness and difference. They review the development of identity studies in linguistics. In particular, they discuss identity studies in the frame of power relations and subjectivity. The authors' key point is that identity is constructed through language use and other symbolic resources. This, they argue, should entail the understanding that linguistic and other cultural resources are shared in particular communities of linguistic practice. I will draw on the concept of 'community' because, in order to make relevant and coherent research of *habal'stvo*, I need to explore this slang in certain context, i. e. I need to take into consideration the membership of those individuals who use it in their gay community of practice.

I should mention also about one important fact concerning perceiving identity while constructing a framework of my research. Rusty Barrett writes about the tendency in sociolinguistic approach to view identity monolithically, i. e. "often assuming one-to-one relationships between language use and membership in some identity category" (1999, 317).

William Labov (1972) and Peter Trudgill (1983), for example, wrote about those people who were implicitly viewed as a 'failed' identity if they did not fit the norms of language usage. In my research I do not assume that if an identity does not use *habal'stvo* than s/he is not homosexual. My aim is not to substantiate that usage of *habal'stvo* is the precondition for anyone's gay identity, but to explore the circumstances and purposes of its usage by those homosexuals who speak *habal'stvo*.

1.4. The concept of community of practice.

The author Ruth Wodak (1997, 7) observes that social groups often define themselves by means of their common language variation which plays an important role in identity creation. She defines these groups as "communities of practice" that is "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor" (Wodak 1997, 9). The author claims that membership is not based on the 'possessing' of some attributes by the individual but on something that s/he 'is doing'. One particular aspect of that doing is using a particular kind of language. Hence, I consider speaking *habal'stvo* as an instance of such an act. I will explore *habal'stvo* in the context of those people/communities of practice who use this slang. I will argue that the status of homosexuality is actually the main reason why people use habal'stvo. Although speaking this slang is not the only characteristics that join together people into the gay community of practice in Kyiv, nevertheless some homosexuals in some circumstances are *doing* their sexuality by using *habal'stvo*. In discussing communities I rely much on language because "it expresses the way individuals situate themselves in relation to others, the way they group themselves, the powers they claim for themselves and the powers they stipulate to others" (Lippi-Green 1997, 31).

According to Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnel-Ginet (1995, 469), "people move into, out of, and through communities of practice" throughout their lives. The authors argue

that the study of gender and language should pay more attention to social and linguistic activities of specific communities of practice. According to Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, one of the major tools for constructing identity and for signaling the belonging to some community and participating in some activity is language. Hence, "how people use language… is a very important component of self-construction" (1995, 470).

According to Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes (1998, 33), when people want to be considered part of a particular social group they express their affiliation to that group by different means. One of such means is "talking like" other members of the group. John Gumperz (1972, 219) defines such speech community as the "human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs". Thus I define the researched homosexual group of people as one that shares the slang *habal'stvo* for signaling their membership in that community. I will explore the peculiarities of language choice according to situations, time, place, relationships between speakers, etc. in order to understand under what circumstances they are likely to use the language variation and make that choice to claim their identity as 'gay'. I will elaborate on the issue of 'community' and 'membership' mainly because it is individuals who decide what language code to use. Thus their choice to speak *habal'stvo* is a sign of their wish to be accepted and perceived as the members of certain 'community of practice' or 'speech community'.

1.5. The concept of codeswitching.

Now I will proceed with the discussion of codeswitching read as the frame given in sociolinguistics for the act of doing linguistically the speakers' membership in a given speech community of practice. The term 'codeswitching' is broadly discussed and used in linguistics, nevertheless there is no strict definition of it. The most sophisticated definition is presented by Gumperz (1982, 59): "Conversational codeswitching can be defined as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different

grammatical systems or subsystems." The one that is more comprehensible is produced by Carol Myers-Scotton and William Ury (1997, 219) who define codeswitching as "the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction".

Earlier Jan-Petter Blom and John Gumperz (1972) proposed two possible ways of analyzing codeswitching: situational switching and metaphorical switching. Situational switching occurs if there is a change of participants, settings, or topics in the course of interaction. By changing codes a speaker reflects his social belonging and relations towards and among participants. Metaphorical switching takes place when a speaker uses a code to convey not the norm-based meaning but the symbolic connotation of it. It allows speaker to use contextualized meaning of a code in order to convey an indirect message.

Habal'stvo is predominantly a situational codeswitching. That is why my research is aimed mainly at revealing those circumstances (situations, interactions, participators, etc.) in which the codeswitching occurs and its purposes. While working on it I could not avoid paying attention to the other aspect which is none the less important. It is the linguistic specificities of using this codeswitching, i. e. how switching occurs. First set of data (questionnaire) will be used in order to elicit metaphorical switching.

Analyzing the second set of data (interviews) and revealing the situational switching, I will follow Myers-Scotton's (1972, 433) idea that "codeswitching may be best explained as the mechanism for the negotiation of respective rights and obligations of participants". In other words, analyzing the circumstances and purposes of switching to *habal'stvo* I will base on the assumption that those individuals who codeswitch to this slang claim their affiliation to those 'identities' that are associated with this code.

To conclude, in this thesis I follow the sociolinguistic approach of studying language and sexuality. I will explore the slang called *habal'stvo* that is used by gay homosexuals in Kyiv in order to reveal the interactants, purposes, and circumstances of its usage. I perceive

those individuals who speak *habal'stvo* as members of a 'community of practice' because there is one common characteristic that unites them. It is the use of the dialect for particular purposes that should indicate their membership in the gay collective. Thus I claim that codeswitching to *habal'stvo* is used by individuals in certain situations in order to signal the speaker's membership in the homosexual community of practice.

Chapter 2 Methodology

In this chapter I present the methods of obtaining the relevant data and empirical tools for the analysis of these data that I will use to validate my hypothesis. In order to reach the purpose of my thesis I will base myself upon qualitative methods. First of all, I want to identify my research as a case study. Following Robert E. Stake's idea (2003, 136), my research will be an intrinsic case study as it will be focused on the specific subject – the specificities for the codeswitch to the Russian language variation *habal'stvo*. The slang *habal'stvo* has not been researched yet, that is why the core information for my research will be obtained with the use of oral history. The main data for my research will come from questionnaires and interviews. In order to make a coherent analysis I will do it from two perspectives. First, analyzing questionnaires I will reveal explicitly articulated linguistic specificities of the spoken slang *habal'stvo* (lexicon, terms, expressions, and grammar). Second, analyzing interviews I will reveal the implicit discourse of communication (interactants, circumstances, and purposes).

In order to contact potential interviewees I send an e-mail (with explanation of my project and request for an interview) to all seven existing LGBT organizations in Kyiv. Only four of them were interested and replied in the affirmative. Later, on my request, these four people advised me to contact their friends, out of whom one agreed to meet for an interview and seven agreed only to fill in the questionnaire and to send it back via internet. Due to ethical issues, the names provided in the analysis are invented, as the interviewees and respondents asked to avoid using their real names.

The limitation for the research is the fact that I am an outsider of the closed gay community of practice. It prevents me from the possibility to conduct a participant observation. During the interviews gay men made the examples of *habal'stvo* but I am sure it cannot be compared with the experience of real participation in gay company gatherings

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where they use this language variation spontaneously and freely.

In order to validate this research hypothesis, the analysis of questionnaire and interviews will be framed within the theory regarding elicitation of what is articulated explicitly and what is articulated implicitly. According to Norman Fairclough (2003, 17), there are always two positions regarding the text: what is said and what is not. Hence what is made explicit is grounded in what is left implicit. Fairclough claims that "all forms of fellowship, community, and solidarity depend upon meanings which are shared and can be taken as given" (Fairclough 2003, 55). Thus analyzing questionnaires I will elicit what meanings are taken as given by the insiders of gay speech community practice and what the linguistic specificities of the written *habal'stvo* are. Still, implicitness has a considerable social importance as it is "a pervasive property of texts" (Fairclough 2003, 55). Implicitness/presuppositions/assumptions are important issues regarding the analysis of ideology. Fairclough discusses assumptions in the frame of power and ideology. His point is that assumed, unquestioned meaning of reality has particular ideological significance. In my case, the ideology of the hypothesis is that there is no such thing as homogeneous gay language; instead there are language variations that can be used by some gay men in certain circumstances. According to the author, assumptions can be divided into several types. He discusses in details three of them: existential (assumptions about what exists), propositional (assumptions about what is/can be/will be the case), and value (assumptions about what is good or desirable) (Fairclough 2003, 55).

Another author who deals with the concepts of explicitness and implicitness is Celia Kitzinger. In the article *"Speaking as a Heterosexual": (How) Does Sexuality Matter for Talk-in-Interaction?* (2005) she analyzes how heterosexuality is displayed through talk and how conversations are explicitly and implicitly oriented to heterosexual relationships. She studies how in the ordinary interactions heterosexuality is constructed and "naturalized" through

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assumptions in the speech.

In the research maid afterwards, which will be involved in my work too, Celia Kitzinger and Victoria Land (2005) analyze how lesbian speakers signal their sexual identity and make a comparison with Kitzinger's (2005) earlier work concerning the production of heterosexual couples through assumptions in speech. In this work the authors particularly discuss the cases of presuppositions occurring in the communicative discourses of lesbians while touching upon such issues as: 'engagement', 'marriage'/'civil partnership', 'we'. Kitzinger and Land (2005, 381) make a point that a homosexual speaker is likely to add such labels as "lesbian" ("gay") to words "event", "couple", etc., while heterosexuals would never do the same with the label "heterosexual". Thus heterosexuals assume that "heterosexual" event, couple, relationships, etc. are the only prevailed, that is why they do not need to add the word that goes without saying.

Regarding the above mentioned authors and based on their works, I will analyze *habal'stvo* from two perspectives: linguistic specificities of the spoken slang (lexicon, terms, expressions, grammar) and discourse of communication (interactants, circumstances, purposes). Thus, on the one hand, the analysis will be made from an explicit perspective of the verbatim articulation of *habal'stvo* as well as from the questionnaire on habal'stvo usage. On the other hand, I will include an implicit perspective and analyze those assumptions that are incorporated into the homosexual speech act. I will analyze *habal'stvo* from two perspectives because this will allow me to validate more efficiently the hypothesis and will make my conclusions more relevant and coherent.

In order to elicit the explicitly articulated meanings of *habal'stvo*, I will use the questionnaire. Through it I will reveal terminology, expressions, and grammar peculiarities of the slang that is used in particular situations. I will also reveal the speakers' familiarity with that codeswitching. However, to attend to the more important aspect of assumptions and

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inferences for using language as a communicative resource, I will also elicit life narratives, stories by gay members of the Kyiv community to have data on implication. Hence, I will analyze interviews with homosexuals who are the members of urban 'community of practice'. The description and analysis of these empirical tools is the subject of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of my thesis.

Chapter 3 Analysis of the Questionnaires

All my life is a struggle of feminine beginning with masculine ending!

(Habal'stvo)

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present an analysis of linguistic specificities of the slang *habal'stvo*. This analysis will be made on the basis of questionnaires from explicit perspective of the verbatim articulation of the language variation. Questionnaire was composed in order to reveal the meaning of *habal'stvo,* the circumstances and interactants this language variation is used in and such linguistic specificities, as: grammar, vocabulary, terms, and intonation. The questionnaire is provided in Appendix 1. Seven people, whom I was advised to turn to by the leaders of LGBT organizations and whom I got in touch with by the internet, agreed to fill in the questionnaire. All of them are gay men who use *habal'stvo* in their communication. All of the respondents live in Kyiv; their age varies from 25 to 35. Four of them did not indicate their names and three put only first name. Thus, in the analysis I will refer to invented names.

The slang *habal'stvo* is used in the Russian language by homosexuals in Kyiv as the majority of the Ukrainian population speaks Russian. Thus, before proceeding to the analysis proper, I will outline some basic rules and specificities in the Russian language in order to lay the foundation for the following issues to discuss.

In the Russian language all nouns (except those that are always used in plural, for example: scissors, gate, etc.) refer to one of the three ganders: feminine, masculine, or neuter. Feminine and masculine genders are varieties of gender category that are characterized by certain form alteration. Regarding animate nouns, the grammatical category of feminine gender signifies female subjects (mother, she-cat), while the grammatical category of

masculine gender refers to male subjects (father, cat).[1] Regarding verbs, not all of them possess the category of gender; still, it is a common category for some verb forms. The gender index is attributed to verbs in singular in Past Tense (for example: came – *prishla* (feminine gender), *prishel* (masculine gender), *prishlo* (neutral gender)); in Subjunctive Mood (for example: would come – *prishla by* (feminine gender), *prishel by* (masculine gender), *prishlo by* (neutral gender)); and in participles (present and past forms) (for example: that came – *prishedshaya* (feminine gender), *prishedshii* (masculine gender), *prishedshee* (neutral gender)). Adjectives also have the category of gender. Both verbs and adjectives correspond with a subject (nouns and pronouns) in gender (for example: beautiful – *krasivaya woman* (feminine gender), *krasivyi man* (masculine gender), *krasivoe dress* (neutral gender)).[2]

One more characteristic feature of the Russian language is the presence of the pronouns *Vy* and *ty* that may be translated to English as *you* with the only difference that they are used in distinct venues. *Vy* is more polite form of *ty* and is normally written with a capital letter. While *ty* is used in unofficial venue, *Vy* is used in the official one, or when addressing strangers, or older people, or in order to display one's respect towards other people (one person or more).[3]

3.2. Analysis of the respondents' answers

First, I will comment such words as: *habal'stvo, habal, habalit', habalka(s)*. Neither the "Big Soviet Encyclopedia" nor the "Russian Encyclopedic Dictionary" contains any variation of the word *habal'stvo*. Only two dictionaries possess the explanation of some variations, that is: "Vladimir Dal's Defining Dictionary of Actual Grate Russian Language" that describes the word *habalit'* (verb) as "to abuse, to brawl, to horse around, to cheek"[4] and

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1 International Creative and Educational Web Portal SHKola.LV,
http://shkola.lv/index.php?mode=cht&chtid=656&subid=105 (accessed June 7, 2009).
2 The Project "Culture of Written Speech" - Gramma.ru, http://www.gramma.ru/RUS/?id=2.28 (accessed June 7, 2009).
3 Ibid.
4 Vladimir Dal's Defining Dictionary of Actual Grate Russian Language,

the "New Dictionary of Russian Language" that gives the following definition to the word *habalka* (noun)*:* "impudent, vulgar woman."[5]

There is no the definition of the word *habal'stvo* in any dictionary. This noun is a variation from the verb *habalit'* and it exists only in oral speech. In order to find out what *habal'stvo* means to gay men*,* I put the corresponding question into the questionnaire. In their answers five out of seven respondents stated that it is a way of communication between gay men (Sergei, Valentin, Dmitrii, Yurii, Vyacheslav). Sergei also added that *habal'stvo* includes "chuckly commentaries, sharp phrases, and ironical statements". Four respondents included in their answers the description of key characteristics of that speech variety, such as: "shift from masculine to feminine gender, vulgarity" (Valentin, Yurii, Vladimir, Dmitrii), "expressivity" (Vladimir), "play of words, twisting some famous quotes" (Vladimir, Dmitrii). One person wrote that "it is a way to express himself and to have fun" (Oleg). Another wrote that "it is a slang that is used in conversation between gay men" (Vladimir). Thus there is no clear definition to the word *habal'stvo* even among those people who use that variety of language. The only thing that insiders of gay community of practice explicitly state is that *habal'stvo* is a variety of speech that is used by gay men and that this slang has a number of characteristics. Writing that *habal'stvo* is a way of communication between gay men, they implicitly pointed out that this language variation may signal one's "membership in some identity category" (Rusty Barrett 1999, 317). By the way, in further answers respondents usually shortened the word *habal'stvo* to *habal.* I should explain that the first variant is a full one, it is a right way to form a noun out of the verb *habalit'.* The word *habal* is a shortening from the full variant *habal'stvo.* Thus, these two words are replaceable.

The next question was: "*Who is habalka?*" All seven respondents wrote that this is a

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gay man who use *habal'stvo* in his speech. Three respondents gave further explanations. They wrote that actually in the Russian language *habalka* is a "loud virago" (Valentin) and a "vulgar woman" (Vladimir, Yurii), but among gay men *habalka* is "a more feminine man" (Valentin) who "parodies a woman" (Yurii); usually it is a "parody of a vulgar woman" (Vladimir). It is clear that those who use *habal'stvo* are familiar with the term *habalka,* though this term involves a different meaning for them than for majority of Russian-speaking individuals. Among seven respondents there were only three who know and perceive this term not only as a feminine gay man who use *habal'stvo* but as a vulgar woman as well.

Next I put a question: "*For what reasons do you use habal'stvo?*" Five of the respondents wrote that usually they do it for fun (Oleg, Yurii, Vladimir, Dmitrii, Vyacheslav). Two declared that they express themselves in such a way and relax (Valentin, Sergei). I see that those gay men who use *habal'stvo* explicitly state that this process of communication between gay men generally is a method to have fun and to relax, like to tell an amusing joke. To combine that point with the answer to the first question, I would say that people may express their verbal creativity in such a way as well. I will elaborate on this topic in the next chapter.

In order to find out whether the slang *habal'stvo* should be known by all gay men, the next question was: "*Is it necessary for a homosexual individual to learn habal'stvo if he wants to belong to homosexual community?*" All seven respondents replied in the negative. Four of them declared that it is not obligatory for a gay man to use *habal'stvo* but he has to be familiar with it (Sergei, Yurii, Vladimir, Dmitrii). At this point, on the one hand, gay men explicitly demonstrate that this slang is not a "homogeneous authentic homosexual language that is valid for all homosexuals" (Kulick 2000, 247), that one cannot estimate whether a person is gay or not only by the fact that this person uses or do not use *habal'stvo*. In other words, the slang is not a characteristic of a gay man; it may be only one of his attributes. On the other

hand, there is a point that if one is a gay man then he has to be aware of this specific way of communication between insiders of gay community of practice.

Further on I wanted to know whether heterosexuals use *habal'stvo*; that is why the next question was: "*Being addressed by a heterosexual individual in habal'stvo, would you respond in habal'stvo as well?*" Six of the respondents wrote that heterosexual people never use that slang (Valentin, Sergei, Vyacheslav, Dmitrii, Yurii, Oleg); three of that six supposed that most of heterosexuals do not even know what *habal'stvo* is (Dmitrii, Yurii, Sergei). One respondent said that he had never been addressed in *habal* by heterosexual people but if he were, he would definitely respond in the slang because "as the call, so the echo" (Vladimir). Although the respondents state that this language variation is not used by heterosexuals, the following question could arise. If *habal'stvo* may be considered as a speech of a vulgar woman parodied by a gay man, should we regard this woman's 'original' speech act as *habal'stvo* too? I think their certainty regarding this issue is based on the fact that one of the key features of *habal'stvo* is a shift from masculine to feminine gender (I will elaborate on this further on). That is why gay men are so sure that heterosexuals do not use this slang. There is just no point for them to do it.

The next step was to find out whether gay men freel*y* use *habal*'stvo or there are certain preconditions and participants that are favorable for codeswitching. Thus, the question proposed was*: "Do you pay attention to surrounding people's sex and/or sexuality when choosing speak or not to speak the slang?*" Although all seven respondents replied in the affirmative, the contents of their answers varied:

> Yes, I do because one should understand when he can use *habal* and when he cannot. (Sergei)
> I do not use *habal'stvo* in the presence of heterosexuals, especially if they are men. (Vladimir)
> I do not use *habal* in relation to and being among those who will not understand me. It is a closed group communication. (Vyacheslav)
> Of course I do. I use *habal* only among my friends who are gay men. (Yurii)
> I can use *habal* only with those who know that I am a gay man. (Oleg)

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I use *habal'stvo* only among closed circle of people who are my friends. (Dmitrii)
Yes, I do. I do not speak *habal* among those who will not understand it. I do not want that somebody stick my tongue with a needle and salt it. (Valentin)

Thus respondents explicitly stated that there are preconditions for them to use the language variation *habal'stvo*. One of the key factors is the presence of those who are aware of one's sexual orientation; usually they are insiders of a gay community of practice. I think it relates to the fact that gay individuals construct their identity through language and signal their belonging to gay community of practice using special language variation, as it was argued by Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (1995, 470). The main reason why gay men would avoid using the slang is the presence of people who would not understand and/or accept such way of self-expression. Behind this explicitness there is an implication that usually they are heterosexuals who do not know the specificities of *habal'stvo,* who are tuned up in a hostile way, and who will not accept this communication. Thus it can be related to Bucholtz and Hall's idea that through language choice individuals demonstrate their stance in the society (2005, 586). I will analyze the venues and preconditions for codeswitching in detail in the next chapter.

After discovering the respondents' familiarity with this gay language variation and after revealing the key situational characteristics that play an important role in the decision to switch to that code or not, I put forward the questions regarding the slang's lexical and intonational characteristics proper.

The seventh question was: *"Are you in favor of the feminization of masculine words that refer to us (in your professional, private, and public lives)?"* All seven respondents replied in the affirmative. However, they specified that they do it only when they use *habal'stvo,* as using feminine gender instead of masculine is a specific characteristics of that language variation. Sergei, for example, wrote: *"Habal'stvo* is based on the shift from masculine gender to feminine." Coming back to the first question I would like to remind that

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only four respondents mentioned the shift to feminine gender as a specificity of *habal'stvo*. Here all seven gay men already explicitly state that a key characteristic of *habal'stvo* is a shift from masculine gender to feminine. Thus, it is a proof that using feminine gender instead of masculine is one of the main features of the slang *habal'stvo*.

The next question was: "*Are there any specificity in pronunciation/intonation of habal'stvo?*" The answers were different. Four of the respondents wrote that there is such thing as "*LAkan'e*" (Sergei, Vladimir, Dmitrii, Yurii), that is to say about oneself in feminine gender. The matter is that in the Russian language the ending *-la* in verbs implies that the speaker is referring to a woman. These four respondents also wrote about such specificity as "*Akan'e*", explained as the lengthening of the letter *a* (Sergei, Vladimir, Dmitrii, Yurii). Two respondents wrote that there are no specificities (Valentin, Vyacheslav). One wrote that "*habal* itself is already specificity as it is a different way of talking*" (Oleg).

The examples of such characteristics as "*Lakan'e*" and "*Akan'e*" will be presented further on. For the moment I can see that some gay men are aware of those linguistic transformations that are actually the basis of the slang, while others are not. Still, their explicit non-acquaintance with those key characteristics does not prevent them from using these same features when speaking *habal'stvo*. In the previous question, for example, Valentin, Vyacheslav, and Oleg indicated that they use feminine gender instead of masculine. In their answers to the last question they showed their familiarity with the lengthening of the phoneme '*a*' as well.

The next question was: "*Would you use habal'stvo when talking with your friends about your sexual experiences? If yes, what terms, expressions would you use?*" All seven answered affirmatively. Some of them even brought examples:

On the czar-gun without any lubricant..... it is da-a-angerous! (Sergei)
I thought that I am rubber but it turned out that I am plastics – I cra-a-acked (feminine gender)! (Vladimir)
O! Your lad will not get into my cup!(Oleg)

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The slide-valve is small but fucking! (Valentin)

One can see that the etymological background of *habal'stvo* appears at that point. Respondents explicitly show the coherence of this language variety with an image of an impudent and vulgar woman who uses abusive words and cheeks. According to the answers it is a common thing that some gay men use *habal'stvo* in order to embroider their sexual narration, to color it, to make it sound both funny and vulgar. As it will come out further, the usage of vulgar lexicon is another key feature of *habal'stvo.*

The next question was: "*Do you use habal'stvo when addressing (or talking about) your boyfriend? If yes, what terms, expressions do you use?*" Five of gay men responded that they always use *habal'stvo* in relation to their boyfriends. Vladimir wrote an example:

O! Our *mamulya (*mummy) has come.
Mamulya (mummy), I feel cheap today, I have a sucked day, I have a head ache...

Sergei wrote that usually he called his boyfriend *dotzya* (my dear daughter)*,* for example:

I often say to my *dotzya*: "My dear, if you do not prize yourself, you will go to bed with nobody."

Dmitrii and Valentin also mentioned the usage of the word *mama/mamulya* (mother/mummy*)* and feminine gender in relation towards their partners. Yurii responded that usually he addresses his boyfriend in feminine gender with certain intonation like in *habal'stvo* but without abusive words:

Edik *priekxala* (has come– feminine gender), come over to see us!
Edik, *dorogaya* (my dear– feminine gender) I'm nuts over you with love!

Oleg and Vyacheslav wrote that they do not use *habal'stvo* in relation to their boyfriends.

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There is a tendency among gay men who use *habal'stvo* to turn to their partners using kinship words, in particular those that are associated with woman's roles in society, like *mother* and *daughter*. Besides, in the Russian language these words are used in diminutive-hypocoristic forms: *mamulya* (mummy) and *dotzya* (dear daughter). In a case if one does not use kinship words, he still uses feminine gender in addressing his boyfriend. There are also gay men who for some reasons responded that they did not use *habal'stvo* in relation to their partners.

The next step was to reveal potential interactants of the process of codeswitching. The question was: "*Do you use habal'stvo when addressing (or talking about) your male friend? If yes, what terms, expressions do you use?*" All respondents replied positively. For example, the answers were the following:

> Yes, of course, I add some coloring to the narration. (Oleg)
> I always use *habal'stvo* with my close *pAdrugas* (she-friends). (Dmitrii)
> Usually I express myself with my close gay friends only. (Vyacheslav)
> It depends on the situation. However, basically I use *habal* in a closed company of my *padrugas* only (she-friends). (Valentin)

Thus there is an explicit tendency to use *habal'stvo* among and towards the closed circle of people who share one's sexual orientation, i. e. who are insiders of gay community of practice and who will understand and share such way of self-expression. Another tendency is to address friends using Russian feminine form of that word instead of a masculine one: *padruga/padrugi* (she-friend/she-friends) instead of *drug/gruz'ya* (friend/friends).

In order to find out whether there are any strategic rules in using the slang, I included the question: "*Do you do this spontaneously or do you prefer to follow some official rules?*" All seven respondents stated that they use *habal* spontaneously. Thus, in spite of the presence of key characteristics of *habal'stvo* (such as: usage of feminine gender instead of masculine, lengthening phoneme *a,* tendency of using some terms), there are neither any fixed rules for that codeswitching nor any commonly accepted norms on how to use that language variation.

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It proves that *habal'stvo* is a dynamic slang variation.

As the last question I proposed 37 random expressions that I found in the web-site http://xabalka.gay.ru/ which contains more than 1,500 expressions in *habal'stvo*. In the following part I introduce the analysis of these expressions in terms of grammatical and lexical specificities, as well as specificities of intonation and pronunciation.

3.3. Analysis of expressions in habal'stvo

Introducing expressions in *habal'stvo* as the last question of the questionnaire, I sought to reveal the respondents' familiarity with some typical phrases that could be used when speaking this slang. The request given was: "*Please write down if you would use the following expressions in habal'stvo.*" The respondents were given a choice to mark all the phrases that they recognized as expressions in *habal'stvo*. Altogether, the respondents confirmed their familiarity with all the proposed phrases. Thus I have selected these exact phrases in order to reveal the explicit grammatical and lexical specificities, as well as specificities of intonation and pronunciation.

3.3.1. Grammatical specificities

Habal'stvo is characterized by one very important feature, which is the substitution of the masculine gender by the feminine one. As mentioned above, gay men do it consciously. They address other men and talk about themselves in the feminine gender. As I already pointed out, in the Russian language nouns, verbs, and adjectives reflect the sex of a person. When addressing males, *habalkas* follow all modifications in the words using feminine gender:

> Here she is! The princess of the charm! The queen of the shock! The crazy empress!
> Her name is the synonym of the style, taste, and talent!
> The only thing that looks grea-a-at on me is you, my pussy ca-a-at!
> Girls, protect crowns, here the ceilings are low!
> You-u-u-ung man, treat the lady with a match!
> There is no need in laughing! It is not a circus here; mama is not a clown!

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That is all, girls! Pray and go to sleep!
Girls, please do not quarrel! I will buy you a spinning wheel!

3.3.2. Lexical specificities

According to the analysis of the respondents' answers above and on the basis of the expressions analyzed in section 3.3., there are some terms that are usually used in relation to an individual and/or a group of gay men. In relation to themselves and their boyfriends, *habalkas* usually use such terms as: *mama/mamulya* (mama/mummy), *dotzya/dotch* (dear daughter/daughter). Regarding their close friends – insiders if gay community of practice – *habalkas* usually use such terms, as: *devachki* (girls), *padrugi* (she-friends), *ledi* (lady).

The lexicon of *habal'stvo* mainly consists of abusive, vulgar, swear words. Usually the context of phrases is a vulgar one, with the cue of sexual interaction. The example of such uncontrolled vocabulary is:

You thought you would get the fairytale? You thought that peacocks would fly now?
No shit!
Ooo, your look stews me, so that I fell throbbing in the corsEt!
By the way, I am bisexual (this word is used in feminine gender, in Russian it is *biseksualka*) – I like both men and boys!
To suck and to cry!
I will go mad if I do not take something into my mouth!
I do not talk to strangers in the bed…
You-u-u-ung man! We will lie together only in case if we are overridden by a truck!
Sometimes it is better to suck than to talk!
She has got only one convolution – on her ass! And that one thinks about one thing only...
My dear daughter, if you behave badly, you will catch a broom on your cunt!

This characteristic is accompanied with the usage of pronoun *Vy* towards the audience and/or a recipient. In all the previous examples when there is pronoun *you* in the English variant, in Russian it is *Vy* (as I mentioned above, it is respectful form of the pronoun that is used in official venue). In a "positive exclamatory" form of *habal'stvo* this pronoun sounds as obsequiousness. In combination with vulgar and abusive words pronoun *Vy* adds irony, paradox and strengthens the intention of slamming/bullying someone.

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Finally, *habal'stvo* can be displayed in a play of words or twisting some famous quotes, for example:

I am so drunk when I am a silly woman... (In the original – I am so silly woman when I am drunk)
Young ma-a-an, invi-i-ite me for a dance! (Words from the famous Russian song)
I think I am here the only one who is not in the cunt... (In the original – I think I am here the only one who is not in the know)
I gave to this one, I gave to that one, but I did not give to this one, I fucked him myself! (A remake of famous childish song)
It is a pity that you are finally leaving! (In the original – It is a pity that you are leaving!)
Go to hell, devil! Remain the pure spirit/alcohol! (A remake of a prayer)
It is already midnight but my husband has not been sucked yet ... (In the original – It is already midnight but my husband has not been fed yet)
To meet with legs wide open! (In the original – To meet with hands wide open)

3.3.3. Specificities of intonation and pronunciation

Habal'stvo is characterized by its expressiveness in the intonation. There are two possible ways of displaying one's expressiveness through *habal'stvo*. One way is an expression of positive feelings and emotions, which in the written speech is conveyed with the sing of exclamation. For example:

Girls! I did ask you not to come to my high-day dressed in second-hand clothes!
You thought you would get the fairytale? You thought that peacocks would fly now? No shit!
Girls, please do not quarrel! I will buy you a spinning wheel!
That is all, girls! Pray and go to sleep!
Here she is! The princess of the charm! The queen of the shock! The crazy empress!
Her name is the synonym of the style, taste, and talent!
Do not teach a grandmother how to cough!
There is no need in laughing! It is not a circus here; the mother is not a clown!

The second way is an expression of negative feelings and emotions, which may sound like a rhetorical question with an element of slam or it may be just an abusive lexicon:

Are you looking for trouble? Here I am!
Sometimes it is better to suck than to talk!
Why should not I kiss you into your fanny? Why should not I cover your back with honey?
Your business is frying pans. Your day is March, 8!

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You thought you would get the fairytale? You thought that peacocks would fly now?
No shit!

Another characteristic of pronunciation in *habal'stvo* is the lengthening of the vowels in all words, especially the phoneme 'a' (in the Russian variant). For example:

Ye-e-es… If a woman is silent it is better not to interrupt her…
You-u-u-ung man! We will lie together only in case if we are overridden by a truck!
Oh, gi-i-i-irls! This is just like a New Year in August!
Maaan! Your words have too much text.
The only thing that looks grea-a-at on me is you, my pussy ca-a-at!
You-u-u-ung man, treat the lady with a match!

3.4. Conclusion

The analysis of questionnaires showed that there are certain circumstances and interactants of the language variation *habal'stvo* as well as the linguistic specificities of grammar, vocabulary, terms, and intonation. *Habal'stvo* signals membership in the identity category since it is a way of self-expression only in a closed gay community of practice. Still, the slang should not be considered an attribute of all gay men, as it is not obligatory to use this language variation in order to belong to a gay community of practice. *Habal'stvo* is a dynamic slang as there are no fixed rules of using it. However, there are a number of linguistic characteristics that are typical for thus slang. Some gay men who use *habal'stvo* are aware of its key features, some are not. Still, they use these characteristics when speaking *habal'stvo* and recognize them in the presented written examples of expressions in *habal'stvo*.

A key grammatical feature of *habal'stvo* is the shift from masculine to feminine gender in words and addressing gay men using feminine gender. There are also a number of lexical characteristics, such as: the common usage of certain terms (for example: *mama/mamulya* (mama/mummy), *dotzya/dotch* (dear daughter/daughter), *devachki* (girls), *padrugi* (she-friends), *ledi* (lady)); the predominant use of abusive, vulgar, and swear words; the usage of pronoun *Vy* instead of *ty;* a play of words and twisting some famous quotes. *Habal'stvo* is a

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very expressive slang, and it can be used to express both positive feelings (such as delight, joy, surprise) and negative ones (such as disappointment, frustration, or even desire to slam somebody).

Hence, the combination of the vulgar lexicon, the usage of feminine gender in words, the lengthening of vowels, and the usage of pronoun *Vy* towards a recipient makes *habal'stvo* a slang variation with an exaggerated mannerism of a vulgar woman represented by a gay man.

Chapter 4 Analysis of the Interviews

Homosexual voice should be studied not only through the intonational characteristics and usage of some lexicon but also through "implication, inference, and presupposition that reveal a speaker's stance within the territories of various societal discourses" (Moonwomon-Baird 1997, 203). Thus, in this chapter I will provide an analysis of the interviews made with five people who openly state their homosexual orientation and familiarity with *habal'stvo* in order to explore their implications and inferences regarding that language variation, i. e. speakers' stance within the language variation itself. All five are activists in gay movement in Kiev. Two of them are leaders of non-governmental gay men organizations, two of them are members of HIV-AIDS prevention organizations, and one of them is a university teacher. They all are in their thirties. These people were the only ones who reacted positively to my appeal to give me an interview about the slang *habal'stvo*. In spite of their openness they asked me not to use their real names in my work. Thus, due to ethical issues, the names provided here are invented. They are: Svyatoslav (S), Vladimir (V), Denis (D), Nikolai (N), and Konstantin (K). I should also mention one fact: four of my respondents use *habal'stvo* themselves and one of them do not use it but has experience in communicating with gay men who use this language variation.

Major questions for the interviews were prepared beforehand and were composed in such a way that they were open enough in order that answers contain a large scope of information regarding the context of using the slang including accounts of examples of using *habal'stvo* in certain situations. The interview questions are provided in the Appendix 2. In addition to the list of prepared questions that step by step revealed the situations, participants, purposes, circumstances, and limits of the usage of the slang *habal'stvo,* as the interview progressed, I also asked questions arising out of the elicited information itself.

First, I will discuss common characteristics of *habal'stvo*, in particular: who use the

slang, the potential venues of using habal'stvo, situations, preconditions, tendency of slang usage, purposes, and motivations for codeswitching. Further on I will analyze the context of using habal'stvo among heterosexual women. Finally I will explore the assumptions that the interviewees make while talking about the situations where the use or avoidance of the slang *habal'stvo* is the topic informants are invited to recall. In the conclusion I will establish the circumstances, situations, participants, and conditions that seem to be in favor of codeswitching in the informants' accounts. My analysis of the data in this chapter will be framed in the linguistic analysis of intertextuality concerned with the exploration of explicitness and implicitness that was discussed in the methodological chapter.

4.1. Common characteristics of habal'stvo

4.1.1. Speakers using the slang habal'stvo

First of all, I want to emphasize that all five respondents agreed that the usage of *habal'stvo* is one of the components that may be a constitutive part of gay identity. Switching to the variation is said to function as a way of self-expression among a closed group of people who are aware of its meaning. In order to use *habal'stvo* gay men are also said to be able to feel safe and protected to use it and it is the occasion when they believe to be among themselves. The discussion of these points along with the quotes from the respondents will be provided further in this chapter.

One point where the interviewees have the same opinion is concerned with the identity of the speaker they believe should use the slang *habal'stvo*. In the very first sentence of their answer to the first question (*What does habal'stvo mean for you?*) two respondents explicitly state that *habal'stvo* is a linguistic variety that is used by homosexual people:

Habal'stvo is a conversational style among people with non-traditional orientation...
(D)

This is a kind of subcultural phenomena that is appropriated exceptionally by man's homosexual sphere. (S)

One answer to this question is implicit:

Habal'stvo is... a peculiar way of self-expression that on purpose goes against norms defined by society. (K)

The informant (K) assumes that there are rules that are defined by society to establish certain behavior as normal and that, in turn, is perceived to be the only right one. According to his assumption, the individuals who use the speech variety *habal'stvo* do something and/or obtain some characteristics that are different from those expected and accepted by social norms. In order to show their difference these individuals use *habal'stvo* as a method of their self-expression. The other two respondents do not touch upon the concept of identity at all. Instead, they draw on the concept of positive emotions:

Habal'stvo is a style of communication that consists of a certain kind of joke... that goes along with certain gestures, behavior and the context itself... On the whole it is... a kind of parody. (V)

Thus here V does not refer explicitly to the (sexual) identity of the individuals; he just assumes that somebody tries to look and sounds like somebody else and that this process of imitation should be funny. But in so far as we have established prior to the interview that I am interested in this particular gay slang, this interviewee can implicitly appeal to this shared understanding, which in turn, may implicate V as a gay individual in the knowing. Another important point about implication is the contribution of the word 'parody' to the implied identity of 'the speaker' of the slang: Who is parodying whom for what identity purposes? Thus the interviewee assumes that as he is a gay man then the one whom he most likely would parody is a woman for signaling his 'feminine' sexuality in some 'sexually appropriate' context.

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When in the flow of the interview I asked a more concrete question: *"According to your experience and observations, who usually use this slang?"* – I received more precise answers from the other interviewees but not from V. He still did not identify the sexuality of the individuals who use this slang. However, he mentioned that those who go to *pleshka* (a street or a park in town where gay men often meet in order to chat with friends) do it more often. (The relevance of *pleshka* will be discussed in more details in *Section 4.1.3.*) There is again the use of implication in V's response. By referring to *pleshka* V implicates the place as one that is frequented by gay men who, by some chain of further embedded implication, is said to usually use *habal'stvo*. Four interviewees gave more precise answers. For example:

> More often passive gays do because they play the role of woman (N)
> Usually they are homosexuals, usually they are feminine men; men who are not ashamed of their natural femininity. (K)

In spite of the explicit words used in the above answers, there are a lot of assumptions at work behind them. For example, in N's answer, the 'natural' unquestionable parallel drawn between 'passiveness' and 'woman' in order to argue for the internal difference in the usage of the slang of the gay community does not appeal to me. In spite of the fact that homosexual people fight against stereotypes ascribed by the society, they themselves can be subjects of stereotyping, except at the expense of women.

Regarding the second example, K's response, it contests the assumption that if an individual is born with male genital organs then it should be shameful and unworthy for him to perform like a woman, i. e. to give way to those attributes that are associated with femininity. However, those gay men who use *habal'stvo* are not ashamed to display characteristics that are traditionally ascribed to women. This position comes remarkably close to Cameron and Kulick's (2003) approach to woman's and (by extension) gay language. They argue that the dominant assumption informing language and gender research as well is that

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'women's language' this language is an attribute of all women and therefore anything that a woman says can be taken to be characteristic of 'women's language'. When an individual then tries to talk like a 'woman' or one does it unconsciously, this person may be heard as a 'woman' due to co-occurring features of one's speech with those that are assumed to be the attributes of 'women's language' (2003, 93). In order to break out of the circularity of this empiricist model, Cameron and Kulick claim that "the fact that gays do X [including using certain speech varieties] does not make X gay" (2003, 88). To put it in other words, identity is a practice rather than a category; it is a performance rather than a preexisting role (Bucholtz, Liang, and Sutton 1999, 7). They propose instead an intermediate level of associations. It is rather certain values that we learn to associate with certain gender, such as passivity with woman and then certain strategic use of language are to be associated with those values as if 'expressions' of the given values. I think it is this dominant logic that is contested indirectly in and by K's response above.

A kind of scheme of those who use *habal'stvo* becomes visible in the interviews. All five respondents denied the possibility of lesbians and heterosexuals using this variation. Thus, *habal'stvo* is a communicative resource predominantly for 'feminine gay men' only.

In order to explore further the identity of the group of individuals who use the slang, I bring in the answers to the other question, that is: "*Is it necessary for a homosexual individual to learn habal'stvo if he wants to belong to homosexual community?*" All of the interviewees answered that it is not a necessary criterion of belonging – but various reasons. N, for example, said it is not a precondition as speaking the variation may function in fact as a barrier in establishing relations in the community:

> No. Generally, gay men do not like *habalkas* ["хабалок", i. e. those feminine gay men who speak *habal'stvo*] because while using *habal'stvo* there is an imitation of woman. (N)

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Another respondent, S, gave a very clear and explicit explanation of that negative attitude towards *habal'stvo*. Since he is the only respondent who claims he does not use *habal'stvo* himself, nor did he use it with me in the interview, in spite of the impersonal, universalizing style of the quote, he is implied to share the value judgments he talks 'about':

> *Habal* is based on the substitution of masculinity by femininity [in language and behavior]... A gay man is a person who has psycho-emotional and intimate attraction to guys, with guys meaning carriers of masculine gender and masculine sexuality. Since *habal* contradicts the notion of masculine gender, it is not accepted by the majority of gay men. (S)

Three others respondents also answered negatively. According to the answers, it is not obligatory to use *habal'stvo* if a person wants to be an insider of homosexual community of practice. Moreover, the gay man who use *habal'stvo* assume that most gay men do not like those gay men who use this slang. In the answer of S there is an implicit division of passive feminine and active masculine gay men. An assumption is that masculine gay men cannot allow themselves to use this slang because it will misrepresent their status, as they will be associated with image of a woman. This supports again the above mentioned Cameron and Kulick's critique of associating an individual with the one whose characteristics s/he performs (2003, 93). Thus this slang is used only by those gay men who possess feminine characteristics and do not feel uncomfortable to be identified with 'woman'. Mainly because of such difference in self-perception, the respondents said that it is not necessary to use this language variation in order to belong to gay community of practice.

Hence, I sum up that *habal'stvo* is a way of signaling the 'feminine characteristics' of those who happened to be born as a man. In other words, those gay men who adopt and perform those linguistically mediated characteristics that are ascribed to heterosexual women by society use *habal'stvo* in order to express themselves and to show their affiliation to non-normative individuals. It proves Wodak's (1997, 7-9) observation that social groups often

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define themselves by means of their common language variation which plays an important role in their identity creation within their group as well. However the membership is not based on possessing some attributes but on something that an individual is doing. In the case of my data it is the process of using the slang *habal'stvo* and performing feminine characteristics in a male body, i. e. doing one's sexuality by using the language variety *habal'stvo.*

4.1.2. Potential venues of using habal'stvo and situational codeswitching

In this part I seek to identify some potential venues of using *habal'stvo* as they may imply relations of power and constraints of life. Here I analyze the circumstances for codeswitching in terms of three types of venues: official, kindred, and informal. In order to explore this issue I asked four of my interviewees[6] the following questions one by one: *"Do you use habal'stvo at work with your colleges?", "Do you use habal'stvo in public institutions (police, banks, post, universities, hospitals, etc.)?", "Do you use habal'stvo with your parents and/or relatives?", "Do you use habal'stvo in magazines with customers and/or shop assistant?"* Regarding the work place, three interviewees responded negatively. Regarding public institutions, all four said no. They explained that due to the positions they occupy, the serious attitude towards their work, and issues of ethics they cannot allow themselves to use the slang in official domains. The main idea of their answers concerning public institutions is that *habal'stvo* is a way of communicating in the closed society and that outsiders will not be able to understand this. One of the respondents made a joke, saying:

> I cannot allow myself to say to a deputy, for example: "Kytcya moya dorogaya (my dear pussy cat), I want to lay with you tonight!" (D)

Only one of the interviewees said regarding the question of work that he uses the slang

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6   I did not put these questions to the fifth interviewee because he himself did not use *habal'stvo*

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because he is open about his sexuality at work:

> Yes, I do. I use *habal'stvo* sometimes because they [colleges] know that I am a gay man. (N)

Thus, the assumption is that if one is surrounded by people who are aware of his sexual orientation, then he has nothing to hide and/or to be ashamed of, including the particular language variety. But there is also the other assumption here, namely that his variation is known to be, is associated with the gay community by the heterosexual society.

Regarding the answer given by D, he implicates that there are some regulations, norms, and rules of communicating on official level and that he cannot allow himself to offend against these. However, the rules he refers to is more of a matter of register (the division of formal and informal styles) in his account and not directly that of sexuality. According to Foucault (1988-1990, 84), "the logic of [internalized] censorship" functions here. As I see it, the usage of *habal'stvo* in official venue is controlled and limited due to such reasons as: the need to be serious in order not to be misinterpreted by colleges as if 'non-professional', the necessity to maintain authority and work process, the responsibility to solve important issues and to communicate with officials. To say it differently, there are relations of power governing the interaction between the participants that is assumed to be a matter of linguistic style only. Thus much depends upon the intersection of the position the interactants occupy in the institutional organization of work (whether one is a leader or he is a member of some organization) and the sexual orientation of the people who communicate (whether they are aware of the person's sexual orientation, whether they understand and accept it). Hence, according to the situation an individual finds himself in, he needs to consider for himself and negotiate the way he will behave and communicate in order to reach the desired effect and result.

It correlates with Foucault's vision of power that is "embodied in the state apparatus,

in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies" (1988-1990, 93). Foucault has produced detailed historical analysis of the ways in which power is exercised and individuals come to be governed through internalizing the discursive production and control of sexuality. In such a way, the language variation used by feminine gay men in Kyiv is also subjected to the power relations that "come from below" (1988-1990, 94) and maintains the homophobic division of labor through the cycle of internalized prohibition.

The possibility to use *habal'stvo* with parents and relatives increases in comparison with the official domain of their life. Three respondents said that they usually use the slang with their mothers. However, at that point they specified that *habal'stvo* is multilevel slang; i. e. there is variation in words and intonation that one uses. Interviewees state that the peak of the *habal* is too vulgar. Thus they usually use some mitigated version of habal, including 'mild words' (*padruga* (she-friend), *devachki* (girls)), less dynamic intonation patterns, and shorter duration of vowels. One of the respondents, N (the one who use the slang at work), said that he does not use *habal'stvo* with parents and relatives because they do not know about his orientation.

Thus, one of the main factors that influence gay man's choice of codeswitching is the interlocutor's awareness of his sexual orientation. More specifically, all of my respondents seem to share the assumption that the interlocutor's awareness of their gay sexuality is a consequence of their willingness to come out to them. However, there is some qualification about this vindication of individual control over the others' knowledge: it is concerned with the level of the so-called vulgarity in the phrases and the way of message delivery using *habal'stvo*. Thus the level of vulgarity and openness depends on the person to whom the message is meant for. Regarding respondents' answers I found an interesting specific feature: those three of them who gave positive answers to the question regarding their use of *habal'stvo* in the kindred domain of their life, talked only about their mothers – heterosexual

women who are the best she-friends for them. Thus it is easier and more possible for feminine gay man to communicate openly with heterosexual woman who accepts his homosexual status and is homely with him. Still, there is a barrier of inarticulate power relations between parents and a child. I think that the status of mother is assumed to be respectable and thus one cannot allow himself to express his thoughts in relation to and/or in presence of mother as directly as with members of his gay community. As Foucault said: "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere" (1988-1990, 93).

Finally, regarding the last question in this part of analysis (informal venue, magazine, for example), I can say that all four interviewees responded positively, though with certain qualifying remarks. Four of them said that they use *habal'stvo* in magazines (supermarkets, boutiques) usually when they are with their friends. They speak *habal'stvo* among themselves. Seldom do they refer to customers and shop-assistants when using *habal* due to their concern not to be incomprehensible to other people. Still, sometimes it happens. One respondent, D, even said that he may use the slang while being without friends because he uses it almost everywhere (except at work).

Based on the answers about the distribution of the language variation in terms of the three types of venues, I sum up the following: within the official venue *habal'stvo* mainly is not used, in the kindred venue the possibility for codeswitching is higher but still there are some limits and preconditions, while in the informal venues the usage of *habal'stvo* is more easy and liberal. Hence, *habal'stvo* is used mainly in the scope of the informal form of socializing among insiders of homosexual community of practice, which, according to Blom and Gumperz, counts as the case of situational switching (1972, 424). I see the following assumptions informing this distribution: feminine gay men reveal their sexual identity when in their understanding there is nothing and nobody to be afraid of. Feminine gay men switch to *habal'stvo* mainly among insiders and when in their perception the situation 'outside' does

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not demand from them to come across as serious, responsible workers, and are not believed to be burdened with questions of ethics and code of morals.

4.1.3. Preconditions for gay men to turn to habal'stvo as a case of conversational switching

In order to learn about the distribution of situations and preconditions for gays to turn to *habal'stvo* my question was: *"In what situations and for what purposes do you/others usually use habal'stvo?"* The common response to it was:

> In some group of people that I am used to or... in some limited circle of people. (V)
> In situations with a closed circle of people who understand a joke and understand why you are speaking exactly in such a manner and why you have chosen exactly this intonation, that is who understand the context. (K)

In other words, my respondents mentioned the security factor as their strategy informing the decisions for themselves. The common situation that these people constantly refer to is being in interaction in *closed* parties in someone's apartment among "insiders". Although in response to some further questions the respondents also mentioned that they have some friends who may use *habal'stvo* everywhere:

> In a toilet room, in an inner-city shuttle bus, in the underground, with colleagues, they always use *habal'stvo*. (V)

These answers, on the one hand, prove once again my conclusion in the previous part of analysis. Thus usually feminine gay men openly display their sexual identity among those individuals who knows them well, who perceive their manner of self-expression without disapproval, and who possibly can maintain such way of conversation using *habal'stvo*. This finding relates to Scotton and Ury's observation that one of the reasons why one would switch codes is "to redefine the interaction as appropriate to a different social arena" (1977, 6).

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The answers above, nevertheless, also show that some gay men assume that their friends use the slang everywhere. I think that assumption regarding the linguistic behaviour of other gay men can signify that within some closed company of homosexual people there are gay men who are seen to stand out for the high performance and high frequency of their usage of the slang. My informants viewed as belonging in the rest of the insiders are represented as admirers of such person's use of *habal'stvo* regardless the circumstances and presence of outsiders. The systematic usage of the slang is implicated as a linguistically signaled ideal behavior for the community, including the informants as well. This is the instance of shifting language variations with a eye on the local dynamics of the interaction and not that of the prescribed power-potentials of the given institutional space that Gumperz calls the case of conversational codeswitching (1982, 75).

Furthermore, being among the closed circle of non-hostile people does not necessarily mean to be confined to the venues of the private sphere, such as being at a party in someone's apartment. Gay men may use with equal ease this codeswitching in some public spaces as well. For example, according to my interviewees' answers, gay men also use *habal'stvo* when they are at *pleshka* (originally meaning 'camping-ground/camp'). *Pleshka* – is a public place where gay men often meet in order to chat with friends. It may be some square, or some bench in the park, or some place in the street that is known to be a meeting place amongst the members of the gay community. In any way, these laces function as relatively open spaces for cruising, gay men are said to come in order to chat with old members of the homosexual community of practice and/or to meet somebody new.

All of the interviewees mentioned *pleshka* in their responses as the common venue for *habal'stvo*. Moreover, two of them claimed that those individuals who regularly go to *pleshka* more often use *habal'stvo* in their speech outside the venues of *pleshka* than those who usually do not go there. Again there is the factor of "ours" in relation to *pleshka*. The feeling

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of safety is based on the assumption that the place is frequented by people who are interested in meeting with similar men and so one is among those who share his way of life, preferences, worldview, problems, fears, desires, etc. But, they cannot take it for granted that everyone around in the given park is necessarily there with the intention of making friends. In other words, switching to communicating in *habal'stvo* is more of a necessity here to signal one's identity and to assume that the others signaling of his familiarity with the slang should mean belonging in the group of gay people in town. The other is signaling his insider status by reciprocating the use of the slang: he is member of this community of (linguistic) practice. One of the interviewees (V) said that usually the whole of his company goes to *pleshka* with a beer when the weather is good and some new people may join them:

> Especially if a cute young man comes, one can present himself as a macho or as a clown, as *habalka.* (V)

According to this, gay men use codeswitching in the public sphere strategically. I see it as the step out of closets in which they were before. Nowadays homosexuals have become relatively more visible. Gathering at *pleshka* they may perform some modulated publicity and attract those people who still are in closets. The individual who will pass such a company of men who speak of themselves using feminine gender in words, (next time) may approach them and get acquainted with.

Since gay men speak *habal* not only among insiders in the closed companies, I was also interested in the possibility of using this slang when communicating with and among heterosexuals, thus I asked: "*Do you use habal'stvo with those who do not understand and/or speak habal'stvo?*" and "*Do you/your friends use habal'stvo being among heterosexuals?*" It appears that the answers are quite common regarding their frame of assumptions. The main idea is that heterosexuals would not know (of) the slang and one's decision to speak the slang with them is then perceived as a matter of linguistically coming out to them:

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Yes, I do. If they do not understand, we will teach them. (D)
I try not to shift it to other people in order not to bewilder them. (V)
Usually not. Sometimes yes. If there is a desire [in me] to draw attention. (K)

A little further during the interview one of the respondents, V returned to this point and elaborated on it. He explained:

Being among heterosexuals I can let myself to use *habal'stvo* only if they are aware that I am a gay man. *Habal'stvo* displays accordingly vulgar woman's behavior. If a person does not get what is going on, he will not understand it and can respond differently. Why would one want to bump into unnecessary questions? (V)

Thus there is the assumption that heterosexuals do not know this speech variation and so its usage is a case of codeswitching available only for a limited circle of people: predominantly for members of the homosexual community of practice and heterosexuals therefore may know if their entry is allowed by the gay community. Furthermore, there is also the assumption that heterosexuals just will not understand, or if they do, the reaction is supposed to be inadequate. On the other hand, there is no meaning and motivation in doing this as the usage of the slang (once taught by homosexuals) will not make the heterosexual community of men gay.

This assumption partly goes along with Gumperz's views regarding the concept of speech community that is "characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of shared body of verbal sings" (1972, 219). But at the same time, it also challenges it in that he would assume that speaking language varieties would coexist with the non-linguistic aspect of practices (such as sexuality in the case of my data). As one of the respondent insightfully observed the fallacy behind such an assumption:

Why cast pearls before swine. (K)
As I see it, nowadays gay men are still scared to show off publicly when being alone

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without friends, or insiders of their community. As I analyzed before, the potential venue of this codeswitching for feminine gay men is informal, and it is not so important whether it will be a closed party, a magazine, or the 'public' venues of *pleshka,* the matter is to be with friends, i. e. with gay men who can understand, support, and encourage – or by implication protect if necessary. Thus the major reason for using *habal'stvo* when gay men are among heterosexuals is the wish to draw their attention, to make them aware of the existence of other sexualities.

4.1.4. Speakers awareness of the slang usage as a particular language variation

Another point my interviewees share is their understanding that the usage of this codeswitching among those who use it systematically, as a matter of conversational switching, counts as a way of signaling their identity. Thus, for one of them:

Habal is a style of life. (D)

For another one:

It is a situational expression of emotions, ideas; to show off oneself, to provoke the public, to associate oneself with gays. (K)

It correlates with previously discussed venues and circumstances of the slang usage. The assumption of the last quote is that there are some situations when one can use this slang and when the individual will avoid using it due to some factors (for example, being among outsiders of community of practice, or in formal situations). Despite D said that for him "*habal* is a style of life", he also said that he does not use this slang at work, for example. Hence, there is a tendency in the usage of *habal'stvo* which depends from the factor of situation and venue.

The awareness is also possible to be established by asking the speakers about their

perception of the reasons for using the slang. To the question "*What are the purposes of using*

habal'stvo?" I received the following answers:

> The key purpose is abreaction... It is a method to display one's extroversion, to show oneself off, to draw attention, finally, simply to laugh, and to rise laughing. (S)

Another one example of answer is:

> It is a vulgar gag... i. e. generally it is used to make a joke, a dissolute comment. (K)

One interesting answer to this question is:

> Well, for example, when I was in US I felt that I could freely express my emotions; I wanted to elate, to liberate myself somehow. (N)

Thus the major aims, according to the answers, are to entertain, to make a fun, to catch one's interest, and to show off. On the one hand this idea correlates with Hayes's (1976, 260) definition of gayspeak as "insider jokes, play on words, exaggeration in speech". On the other hand, I wonder why gay men say that usually they use *habal'stvo* for fun if they also state that this is a kind of self-expression for them and a blurring of socially ascribed gender borders. As if they are ashamed to show a 'woman' inside them, to admit that their man's appearance does not correspond to their inner feminine characteristics. It appears that feminine gay men consciously parody an image of woman (besides, not just an image of 'woman' in the meaning of feminine creature, but as a vulgar one, which is more expressive and noticeable) without actually taking it seriously. Maybe it signifies that in fact feminine gay men do not associate themselves with women, maybe *habal'stvo* is just a way to show that an individual does not correspond to categories ascribed by society, i. e. that an individual is neither a man, nor a woman in the society's perception.

On the question: "*Do you use habal'stvo spontaneously or do you prefer to follow some official rules?*" all four interviewees answered that they use this codeswitching

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absolutely spontaneously, automatically, extempore. Thus it turned out that this language variation is not static:

> *Habal* is an endless creativity; i. e. *habal* would not be *habal* if it did not include elements of grotesque, paradox... that make our speech sound comic and bizarre. (S)

Still, there are some common rules or frame of using it. Except using feminine gender instead of masculine:

> *Habal'stvo* is a play of words, twisting some famous quotes and variation in intonation. (K)

Thus, anyone can invent something new at any moment following basic features. As I read it, the slang is too vivid and flexible. It emerged with the only two important characteristics: to convert masculine gender into feminine one and to express vulgar thoughts. Thus *habal'stvo* gives speaker the opportunity to identify oneself with femininity and vulgarity.

In order to reveal the way how and when homosexuals learn to use *habal'stvo,* I approached them with the following questions: "*At what age did you use habal'stvo for the first time?*" and "*How did you learn this slang?*" On the basis of the answers I can say that the starting point of usage of this slang depends directly on the first (sexual) experience, their encounter with members of the community. All of them referred to their first boyfriends and older gay people they hang out with as people from whom they learned how to use *habal'stvo,* its verbal (shift from masculine to feminine gender, intonation, and some basic expressions) and nonverbal (gestures) specificities. Four respondents indicated the age from 16 to 18 the time when they first used *habal'stvo.* The most interesting example of the answer is:

> I had a she-teacher , her name was Dima [a man's name]. She taught me. She kept telling me: "Dotcya (diminutive-hypocoristic form of the word *daughter*), if you

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cannot use *habal'stvo* all men will turn away from you." Thus I had to learn it, as I wanted man's love and tenderness. (D)

Hence, there is a tendency among gay men to start using this slang after some affectionate and extended acquaintance with insiders of the gay community. These observations are not surprising in that they support the expectations that a community of practice is something that is 'in the making', that needs actual participation. It might seem as a truism but there is no research in sociolinguistics to date that would trace down the actual formation of such communities, the processes of becoming members of them. It is simply assumed as already formed at the moment of the researchers' collection of data[7]. My informants' responses prove the need for such research. Once they are allowed to enter and this way become an insider they will also need to adopt the slang in order to show their affiliation with that "class" of people. In the case of *habal'stvo* it depends on the linguistic performance of femininity in gay man, as I already mentioned in Section 4.1.1. This point reflects Wolfram and Schilling-Estes's (1998, 33) opinion that one of the means to express one's affiliation with particular group of people is "talking like" other members of the group.

4.2. The analysis of the life narratives
Here I will analyze life narratives of homosexual men regarding their decision to use or not to use *habal'stvo* that I collected in order to be able to address the importance of the context for codeswitching beyond the informants' account in response to my questions. In order to elicit the interviewees' assumptions at work I asked them to recall two main situations. The first question was: "*Can you recall a situation where you thought you are talking to an in-group member(s) and therefore you used habal'stvo for the reconstruction of some gay massages but it was not welcome?*" The second question was: "*Have you find yourself in the situation (or witnessed others) where your (their) sexuality got exposed,*

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7   For a review of the state of arts regarding the status of the concept see *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity.* by Etienne Wenger, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

problematized or somehow suggested (directly or indirectly) although you were not trying to signal your gayness through any linguistic means to others?"

Regarding the first question, two of my interviewees (S and D) answered it did not happen to them and three of them (N, V, and K) recalled such situations. Although one of the three, V said that such situation happened not with him but with his friends:

> They used *habal'stvo* among insiders when they somehow should not use it, for example, at a meeting... They were listened to but as a rule they were not taken seriously. Accordingly, the attitude towards such form of expressing themselves was not approved. [One should chose] either theater or a serious attitude to the work. (V)

V also pointed out that if it is informal communication in closed company then usually it is perceived normally or neutrally. Thus here is a situation when some gay men (the friends of the interviewee) used *habal'stvo* while being among insiders but those who used the slang did not take into consideration the context of the situation. As I found out during the previous analysis, *habal'stvo* is rarely used in official venues, such as during a meeting at work. The interviewee's friends assumed that they can use the slang because they were among their friends who knew about their sexual orientation, however, they were misunderstood by their colleges and put down as not serious enough as they 'played theater' instead of working.

Out of the three respondents who said it had happened to them, K claimed that it had happened with him in night clubs a couple times when he was addressed in *habal:*

> I doubt that I can recall the phrase but a guy made me some compliment in *habal*... to which I reacted negatively 'cause I did not know that person, i. e. if you would like to get acquainted with somebody, just approach and do it. To throw some vulgar compliments towards me by a person whom I do not know... so here *habal'stvo* was not welcomed by me. To the contrary, it [*habal'stvo*] was perceived as a negative evaluation, as negative characteristics of the person who addressed me. (K)

Here again the one who was unwelcome at the point of using the slang was not K (the interviewee) but the stranger. The stranger assumed that it was a great idea to start

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acquaintance with the show-off element. However, it might be perfectly possible that by addressing the interviewee in *habal* he just tried to check whether the interviewee was also homosexual or not. Anyway, the context of not knowing each other played a main role in the non-preferred response to the compliment in *habal*. The compliment was not welcome by the gay man because it came from the stranger and it assumed too much of intimacy by paying the compliment immediately in the 'in-group' slang.

The second person who recalled a situation is N. In his story the usage of *habal'stvo* was not approved by heterosexuals:

> More often it happens in the cafe when we meet up with friends and begin to use *habal'stvo*. There may be side-glances and they [people at the next table, for example] may say: "There you go! A bunch of gay men! (N)

N also added that such disapproval happens as well being at apartment gatherings among homosexuals:

> Some may say: "O! *Habalkas* are in here! (N)

It is an interesting example of sexual hierarchy: those who use the slang are perceived by heterosexual people as homosexuals and they express their negative attitude towards them. In addition, within the very community of practice these feminine gay men are also sometimes perceived disapproving by others gay men. Thus those who use *habal'stvo* are often under pressure of other people. In spite of gay men assumptions that they are among insiders, still they cannot freely use codeswitching due to other factors, such as: surrounding people, context of the situation/venue, etc.

Regarding the second question, two of the respondents (N and K) answered negatively and there are three positive answers (S, V, and D). One of them said the following:

Yes, probably I was in such situation but it was due to the fact that people knew me well and juxtaposing some facts and circumstances related to me they made such conclusions for themselves. But directly – no... because I am completely opened regarding this issue... most likely I would develop this theme in order to eliminate things that were not articulated. (S)

Another answer was:

I can tell you that sometimes the opposite happens when you make cues to a person that you are a gay man until you say it straight into his face: "Kytcya moya dorogaya, ya – gei! (My dear pussy cat, I am a gay man!)" I can add one more thing, I say about my sexual orientation when meeting whoever it is, i. e. I am not ashamed that I am a gay man, I am proud of this. (D)

One more response was the following:

I think yes. For example, in the university there are three she-group-mates who know. (V)

Then he described that they find it out because of his unmarried status, his way of dressing ("too stylish"), and mannered way of communicating. He added:

But there was not such situation when people would point out that I am a gay man or a fag, maybe they noticed it but I am not aware of it. (V)

In that case there is a common openness in the issue regarding one's sexual orientation. Those gay men whom I interviewed are open homosexuals; they do not hide their affiliation with gay community. Thus they are not ashamed of their status; they explicitly state it to people. During the interview the gay men mentioned that the slang for them is not a method to show off their homosexual status in public but it is one of the attributes of their sexual identity that may or may not be the component of 'gay man' in a given situation. As the last interviewee mentioned, there may be a number of other signals/characteristics that may mark him as homosexual. Since not all gay men use *habal'stvo,* it cannot be considered as the only and the most outstanding feature that signals the person's gayness but the slang is a potential

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component of that gay identity. The slang serves as one of the indicators, as one of the components of gay status and that has turned out mainly to signal one's feminine gay status within the gay community in Kyiv to those people whom one perceive as potential homosexuals or to those whom one knows and who knows about the speaker's gay status.

4.3. Conclusion

In the analysis of the interviews with five gay men I found out that it is not obligatory to use *habal'stvo* if a person wants to be an insider of homosexual community of practice. The slang *habal'stvo* is used by feminine gay men. Due to power relations and constraints of life the slang is usually used in the informal venue among those people who are aware of individual's sexual status (mostly they are insiders of gay community of practice and relatives). One of the main preconditions for codeswitching is being among closed circle of friends. Although it does not mean that feminine gay men use the slang only in the closed parties at somebody's apartment. People also use it in public sphere (for example, on the *pleshka)* but being with company of friends – insiders of homosexual community.

There is a tendency among gay men to start using this slang after close acquaintance with insiders of gay community (usually it connects with the first sexual experience). The major aims, according to the answers, are to entertain, to make a fun, to catch one's interest, and to show off. Although, according to my analysis, *habal'stvo* is used by gay men not just for fun but as one of the methods to signal their sexual identity and needs, as well as feminine features of character and behavior both for insiders and for outsiders of gay community of practice.

Finally, I found out that sometimes feminine gay men assume that the context of using *habal'stvo* is favorable but it turns out that they were wrong. Thus, there are situations when even insiders may perceive this codeswitching inappropriate (for example, at work place, with strangers, among those gay men who do not like when somebody uses the slang). In any way,

habal'stvo cannot be considered as the only and the most outstanding feature of person's affiliation to gay community. It is one of the components of feminine gay man by means of which the one expresses his feminine characteristics.

Conclusion

In the thesis I investigated linguistic and circumstantial specificities of the slang *habal'stvo* that is used by gay men in order to index their *feminine* homosexual status within gay community of practice in Kyiv.

First, I analyzed the questionnaire filled in by seven respondents in order to reveal such explicitly articulated linguistic specificities of *habal'stvo,* as: grammar, vocabulary, terms, and intonation. I discovered that a key grammatical feature of *habal'stvo* is the shift from masculine to feminine gender in words and addressing gay men using feminine gender. There are also a number of lexical characteristics, such as: the common usage of certain terms (for example: *mama/mamulya* (mama/mummy), *dotzya/dotch* (dear daughter/daughter), *devachki* (girls), *padrugi* (she-friends), *ledi* (lady)); the predominant use of abusive, vulgar, and swear words; the usage of pronoun *Vy* instead of *ty;* a play of words and twisting some famous quotes. *Habal'stvo* is a very expressive slang, and it can be used to express both positive feelings (such as delight, joy, surprise) and negative ones (such as disappointment, frustration, or even desire to slam somebody).

Second, I analyzed interviews conducted with five gay men in Kyiv four of whom use *habal'stvo* themselves and one of them do not use it but has experience in communicating with gay men who use this language variation. Paying more attention to implicitness and speakers' stance within the language variation itself, I revealed that *habal'stvo* signals membership in the identity category since it is a way of self-expression only in a closed gay community of practice. Still, the slang should not be considered an attribute of all gay men, as it is not obligatory to use this language variation in order to belong to a gay community of practice.

The slang *habal'stvo* is used by *feminine* gay men. Due to power relations and constraints of life the slang is usually used in the informal venue among those people who are

aware of individual's sexual status (mostly they are insiders of gay community of practice and relatives). One of the main preconditions for codeswitching is being among closed circle of friends. Although it does not mean that feminine gay men use the slang only in the closed parties at somebody's apartment. People also use it in public sphere (for example, on the *pleshka)* but being with company of friends – insiders of homosexual community.

There is a tendency among gay men to start using this slang after close acquaintance with insiders of gay community (usually it connects with the first sexual experience). The major aims, according to the answers, are to entertain, to make a fun, to catch one's interest, and to show off. Although, according to my analysis, *habal'stvo* is used by gay men not just for fun but as one of the methods to signal their sexual identity and needs, as well as feminine features of character and behavior both for insiders and for outsiders of gay community of practice.

Finally, I found out that sometimes feminine gay men assume that the context of using *habal'stvo* is favorable but it turns out that they were wrong. Thus, there are situations when even insiders may perceive this codeswitching inappropriate (for example, at work place, with strangers, among those gay men who do not like when somebody use the slang). In any way, *habal'stvo* cannot be considered as the only and the most outstanding feature of person's affiliation to gay community. It is one of the components of feminine gay man by means of which the one expresses his feminine characteristics.

In this way I have validated the hypothesis which is: the Russian dialect *habal'stvo* is a communicative resource used by Ukrainian homosexuals that serves to index through language use the belonging of an individual to the gay community of practice. *Habal'stvo* is not a homogeneous language of homosexuals but a particular case of codeswitching that aims to signal man's *feminine* homosexual status.

As this thesis could not and must not cover all the aspects of the slang *habal'stvo,*

future research on this language variation could be carried out in the following fields: phonetics, nonverbal behavior (facial, eye, and hands gesturing), and professional usage of *habal'stvo* by transvestites and drag queens.

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Please indicate your personal data before answering the questions.

Name:

Sex:

Sexuality:

Age:

Occupation:

Residence:

Date:

1.   What does *habal'stvo* mean for you?

2.   Who is *habalka?*

3.   For what reasons do you use *habal'stvo?*

4.   Is it necessary for a homosexual individual to learn *habal'stvo* if he wants to belong to homosexual community?

5.   Being addressed by a heterosexual individual in *habal'stvo*, would you respond in *habal'stvo* as well?

6.   Do you pay attention to surrounding people's sex and/or sexuality when choosing speak or not to speak the slang?

7.   Are you in favor of the feminization of masculine words that refer to us (in your professional, private, and public lives)?

8.   Are there any specificities in pronunciation/intonation of *habal'stvo*?

9.   Would you use *habal'stvo* when talking with your friends about your sexual experiences? If yes, what terms, expressions would you use?

10. Do you use *habal'stvo* when addressing (or talking about) your boyfriend? If yes, what terms, expressions do you use?

11. Do you use *habal'stvo* when addressing (or talking about) your male friend? If yes, what terms, expressions do you use?

12. Do you do this spontaneously or do you prefer to follow some official rules?

13. As the last question I introduce several expressions. Please write down if you would use the following expressions in *habal'stvo*. Please answer for each phrase.

Girls! I did ask you not to come to my high-day dressed in second-hand clothes!

Oh, gi-i-i-irls! This is just like a New Year in August!

You thought you would get the fairytale? You thought that peacocks would fly now? No shit!

Ooo, your look stews me, so that I fell throbbing in the corsEt!

By the way, I am bisexual (this word is used in feminine gender) – I like both men and boys!

Girls, please do not quarrel! I will buy you a spinning wheel!

Do not make surprised movements by the hands!

To suck and to cry!

Maaan! Your words have too much text.

Your business is frying pans. Your day is March, 8!

I will go mad if I do not take something into my mouth!

Why should not I kiss you into your fanny? Why should not I cover your back with honey?

That is all, girls! Pray and go to sleep!

I do not talk to strangers in the bed…

Koson'ki (diminutive-hypocoristic from the word "braids") overboard, volosiki (diminutive-hypocoristic from the word "hair") down the wind… Let's chuckle!

Ah, could you give me a cue how can I switch off the headlights here?

Here she is! The princess of the charm! The queen of the shock! The crazy empress! Her name

is the synonym of the style, taste, and talent!

You-u-u-ung man! We will lie together only in case if we are overridden by a truck!

Ye-e-es… If a woman is silent it is better not to interrupt her…

Do not teach a grandmother how to cough!

Sometimes it is better to suck than to talk!

Are you looking for trouble? Here I am!

There is no need in laughing! It is not a circus here; the mother is not a clown!

All my life is a struggle of feminine beginning with masculine ending!

You-u-u-ung man, treat the lady with a match!

Girls, protect crowns, here the ceilings are low!

She has got only one convolution – on her ass! And that one thinks about one thing only…

My dear daughter, if you behave bad, you will catch a broom on your cunt!

I am so drunk when I am a silly woman…

Young ma-a-an, invi-i-ite me for a dance!

I think I am here the only one who is not in the cunt…

I gave to this one, I gave to that one, but I did not give to this one, I fucked him myself.

It is a pity that you finally are going away!

Go to hell, devil! Remain the pure spirit/alcohol!

It is already midnight but my husband has not been sucked still…

The only thing that looks grea-a-at on me is you, my pussy ca-a-at!

To meet with legs wide open.

Appendix 2 Questions for the interview

1. What *habal'stvo* means for you?

2. Do you know anything about the origin of the word " *habal'stvo* "?

3. Is it necessary for a homosexual individual to learn *habal'stvo* if he wants to belong to homosexual community?

4. How did you learn this slang?

5. Are there any peculiarities in pronunsiation/intonation of *habal'stvo*?

6. At what age did you use *habal'stvo* for the first time?

7. In what situations and for what purposes do you/others usually use *habal'stvo*?

8. Do you use *habal'stvo* when addressing (or talking about) your boyfriend or a male friend?

9. Have you heard other people using *habal'stvo* in relation to their boyfriends or male friends?

10. What terms, expressions, phrases do you use or hear used?

11. Is the usage of *habal'stvo* for you intimate, private, a group practice, or public?

12. Do you use *habal'stvo* at work with your colleges? If yes, what terms, expressions do you use? If not, why?

13. Do you use *habal'stvo* with your parents and/or relatives? If yes, what terms, expressions do you use? If not, why?

14. Do you use *habal'stvo* in public institutions (police, banks, post, universities, hospitals, etc.)? If yes, what terms, expressions do you use? If not, why?

15. Do you use *habal'stvo* in magazines with customers and/or shop assistant? If yes, what terms, expressions do you use? If not, why?

16. Do you use *habal'stvo* with those who do not understand and/or speak *habal'stvo*? If yes, for what purposes?

17. Are you in favor of the feminization of masculine words that refer to us (in your professional, private, and public lives)?

18. Do you use *habal'stvo* spontaneously or do you prefer to follow some official rules? Give specific examples. Explain why.

19. According to your experience and observations, who usually use this slang? If only gays WHY do you think that is the case?

20. Is there any time/age frequency among homosexuals in using *habal'stvo*? How do you think, why there is if any?

21. Do you/your friends use *habal'stvo* being among heterosexuals?

22. Do you pay attention to surrounding people's sex when choosing speak or not to speak the slang?

23. Can you recall a situation where you thought you are talking to an in-group member(s) and therefore you used *habal'stvo* for the reconstruction of some gay massages? But it was not welcome?

24. Have you find yourself in the situation (or witnessed others) where your (their) sexuality got exposed, problematized or somehow suggested (directly or indirectly) although you were not trying to signal your gayness through any linguistic means to others?

25. Are there any taboos or prohibitions of the usage of the slang? Why?

26. Are there any other peculiarities about the slang?

27. Tell anything you would like about *habal'stvo*. May be something that we did not cover while interview.

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