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#### How to cite:

Marquez-Reiter, R; Ganchenko, K and Charalambidou, A (2016). Requests and counters in Russian traffic police officer-citizen encounters: face and identity implications. *Pragmatics and Society*, 7(4) pp. 512–539.

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Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1075/ps.7.4.01mar>

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# **Requests and counters in Russian traffic police officer-citizen encounters: face and identity implications**

## **Abstract**

This paper analyses video recorded interactions between police officers and drivers in traffic stops in Russia. The interactions were recorded via cameras installed on the drivers' car dashboards, and subsequently uploaded to YouTube; a practice to which over one million Russian motorists have resorted to counterbalance perceived high levels of bribery and corruption (Griaznova 2007). The analysis focuses on responses to opening requests for identification in five different encounters. These show that the drivers repeatedly engage in potentially interpersonally sensitive activities in which the vulnerability of face, especially that of the police officer, is interactionally manifested by launching counter requests in return. The organisation of the request - counter request sequences highlights how face and identity related concerns are interwoven in the participants' attempts to contest each other's authority.

**Key words:** counter requests, face, discourse identities, situational identities, transportable identities

## **1. Introduction**

This paper focuses on the examination of five interactional episodes downloaded from YouTube depicting a specific activity type (Levinson 1979), namely institutional encounters between Russian traffic police officers (TPO) and Russian motorists. In all cases, a TPO stopped a driver for having allegedly committed a traffic violation. As a result, drivers recorded the interactions and then posted the recordings on YouTube with a view to exposing and challenging the officers and, importantly, to have their alleged traffic violations legally rebuked.

Under articles 20, 67 and 68 of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs Administrative Order No 185 (Rossijskaja Gazeta 2009), TPOs have to stop the vehicle in an appropriate place, immediately approach it, identify themselves by stating their position, rank and surname, briefly introduce the reason why the vehicle was stopped and ask the driver to provide proof of identity in the form of a driving license or a servicing certificate. Moreover, if asked, TPOs must show their police ID as well (Rossijskaja Gazeta 2009).

Therefore, the TPO-citizen exchanges examined here are institutional, goal-directed encounters, characterised by power asymmetry between the interactants and strict role allocation. Here TPOs may

be restricted in the amount of bargaining power over the role-relevant identities they are engaged in, but have, nevertheless, more power than the drivers, given their responsibility to enforce the law. This, in turn, vests them with the authority to stop cars and make drivers comply with traffic rules (Hudson 1970). On the other hand, the drivers are citizens and, as such, are expected to abide by the rules of the State and display obedience and cooperative behaviour. In view of this, the interactional order underlying this type of institutional encounter rests on this kind of “attuned” agreement between social actors, in this case, between TPOs and drivers over their respective roles and identities (Goffman 1959, 9).

The practice of video-recording police encounters with cameras installed in citizens’ cars and subsequently uploading the interactions to YouTube is a relatively new yet pervasive phenomenon in Russia (Balmforth 2012; BBC 2013) that over one million drivers have engaged in (Al Jazeera 2012). This should not come as a surprise given the current socio-political climate in Russia where the State and its officials are regularly accused of high levels of bribery and corruption (Griaznova 2007; Toepfl 2011; Transparency International 2015; Cheloukhine et al. 2015). A case in point is what the general public perceives as the unlawful application of traffic fines (Gudkov 2000; Griaznova 2007; Chistyakova and Robertson 2012).

Therefore, motorists have resorted to video footage as a tool for ‘ensuring that justice is done’ (Al Jazeera 2012; MVD Rossii 2013). This is because video footage constitutes admissible evidence in the court of law (Kovalev et al. 2014). It is frequently used against staged accidents and frauds on roads, such as illegal actions on the part of TPOs (Balmforth 2012; Galperina 2012; MVD Rossii 2013; TASS 2013; Kovalev et al. 2014). The 2009 changes in legislation which specify road users’ ability to use video- and sound-recording equipment such as video-devices, in combination with a ‘sloppy online content policy’ and a deep distrust in the police have made dash-cam footage highly popular in the Internet (Rossijskaja Gazeta 2009; Galperina 2012; Chistyakova and Robertson 2012). Modern technology (i.e. car dashboard cameras) coupled with a judicial system which allows the use of video evidence in court without the consent of all the parties involved, have vested Russian motorists with the ability to record traffic stops, make them publicly available on the internet, and name and shame poor practice in traffic stops.

Stopping a vehicle contravenes the right of the public to move about freely. This is because it represents an imposition on the driver’s territory in as much as the car represents a privately embodied space (see, for example, Miller 2001; Farman 2012). In addition, the possibility of imposing fines of citation could

make these encounters potentially contentious. For instance, Dastjerdi et al. (2011) reported the deployment of threatening activities such as the PO's use of a superior tone, drivers' resistance, attempts to deny charges and refusals to comply with requests during illegitimate stops with a view to challenging the PO's power and authority.

The newly emerged practice of video recording may have a restraining effect on the actions of the TPOs, whose name, post and other sensitive information regarding their personal and institutional identity could be exposed to the online public without their consent. Thus, traffic police – citizen encounters offer us a window into the enactment of potentially interpersonally sensitive activities. Indeed, our data show that drivers repeatedly engage in activities in which the vulnerability of face especially that of the TPO, is made interactionally manifest by the non-ratification of situationally ascribed identities. Specifically, the recorded encounters show an array of activities which systematically aggravate the TPOs face and identity, including explicit refusals to comply with legal requests (e.g. requests for ID, requests to step out of the car), direct disagreements (e.g. rejecting that the speed limit was broken) and challenges to the TPOs' competence to perform their job (e.g. explicitly stating that TPOs do not comply with relevant legislation). Face is understood as the “positive social value” or “approved social attributes” that social actors claim for themselves and which are ratified by others during social encounters (Goffman 1967, 5). Thus one's face and identity should be continuously ratified by others in social encounters, such as complying with requests issued by TPOs. This is because face is “an image of self” (Goffman 1967, 5), a “mask” or a “role” (Locher 2004, 52) and also an identity-based phenomenon, where a person is seen as an incumbent of a membership category or group such as traffic police officer or driver (see also, Tajfel 1982; Warfield 1987; Holtgraves 1992; Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2013; Locher 2010; Blitvich 2013). In view of this, our analysis takes into account the fluidity of both constructs as they emerge and are negotiated, established, maintained, supported or threatened by interactants during these institutional encounters (Bucholtz 1999; Locher 2011; Perelmutter 2015).

The article focuses on a single sequence type: opening requests for identification (ID) with special attention to their response sequences. Participants, especially TPOs, orient to them as interpersonally delicate as illustrated by the ways in which face and identity concerns are manifested. Shon (2005) suggested that despite the fact that requests for ID constitute routine activities in police-citizen encounters, requestors (typically the TPO) could be put in a “morally inferior position of being threatened with rejection” (p. 842). A refusal to comply with a projected request was reported to truncate the routine flow of the encounter and interpreted as “blatant disobedience”, triggering further

action such as the issuing of threats and warnings given to motorists during routine patrol work (Shon 2005, 842). In our data requests to show ID were nine out of ten times met with resistance, as drivers launched counter requests in return, which challenged common sense expectations of the situation, thus making them the primary focus of our investigation.

The notion of resistance, non-compliance and even face aggravating behaviour may be seen as inherent in institutional interactions to which police - citizen encounters undoubtedly belong. For instance, Limberg (2008) explored the conflicting and potentially offensive nature of police interactions. He examined how participants used verbal threats to interactionally negotiate their roles and institutional power. Particularly, offending parties frequently engaged in "tacit" and "on record" types of resistance such as ignoring or verbally challenging accusations. These actions he claimed could potentially constitute face aggravation within this institutional setting given the PO's responsibility to enforce law and protect established social norms (p. 163). It has been suggested that there are certain activity types where face-damaging acts are strategically routinised and even institutionally sanctioned such as in military and police discourse (Culpeper 1996, 2005, 2011, Culpeper et al. 2003, Bousfield 2008, Limberg 2008) and media discourse (Lorenzo-Dus, 2008, 2009). Notably, Kienpointner (1997:271) suggested that "strategic rudeness in public institutions" is an incarnation of power triggering an argumentative stance as a dominant element in interaction and Culpeper (2011) noted that verbal abuse or rudeness could be seen as the strategy to promote group interests.

Thus TPO - citizen traffic stops provide fertile ground for the examination of interpersonally delicate activities. This is partly because they are intrusive legally occasioned events and are interactionally constructed and oriented to as such by the participants, particularly by the motorists in their attempts to resist or revoke a potential fine through challenging the role and identity of TPOs. This paper, then, seeks to shed light into how face threatening activities, and in particular the under-researched configuration of requests/counter-requests for identification, are interactionally managed in contemporary institutional encounters. Although interactional practices in police-citizen encounters have received some attention (see, for example, Tracy and Anderson 1999; Rønneberg and Svennevig 2010; Whalen and Zimmerman 1990 on calls to the police, Haworth 2006 and Yoong 2010 on police interrogation and interview, Shon 1998, 2002, 2005 on police - citizen encounters), they nevertheless merit further study given the newness of the practice in the lingua-culture material examined in this article.

## **2. Previous research on requests, their responses and counters**

Requesting is an ubiquitous human activity that has received considerable attention in pragmatics, particularly from a speech act perspective. As 'directives' (Searle 1979), or 'impositives' (Leech 1983) they entail an attempt to impose some kind of obligation on the hearer to perform an action in accordance with the speaker's needs and desires. It is thus not surprising that requests have been widely researched from an (im)politeness perspective. It has been suggested that requests fall under the category of intrinsically impolite and face threatening acts insofar as they infringe on the hearer's negative face wants, that is the want for freedom of action and freedom from imposition (Brown and Levinson 1987). From a conversation analytic perspective, requests as first pair parts (FPP) have been shown to be dispreferred first actions and are oriented to by the interlocutors as uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult, or risky (see, for example, Levinson 1983, Schegloff 1980, 2007, Pomerantz 1984: 63). The turn shape of requests, which may include markers such as delays, repairs, accounts, hesitation or mitigation, exhibits participants' dispreferred orientation to this action. One way in which the participants collaborate to forward a potentially dispreferred action is through the issuing of pre-sequences (Schegloff 2007) to the first pair part of the action as illustrated by request preliminaries (Schegloff 1980) such as 'Can you do me a favour?' In this way, it is possible to forestall possible rejection turns hence promoting social solidarity and minimizing the interpersonal sensitivities associated with the activity (Heritage 1984).

Notwithstanding the common Anglo-American scholarly predisposition to associate requests with face threatening activities, requesting is not always face threatening (e.g. Márquez Reiter 2000). For instance, a comparison between interactants' management of requests suggests that in some cultural contexts issuing requests is not considered as face threatening (Wierzbicka 1991; Dorodnych 1995; Spencer-Oatey 2000; Ogiermann 2009). On the contrary, it may be even seen as a face-enhancing act that reflects in-group cohesiveness, status differences and position in the society (see, for example, Matsumoto 1988 on face in Japanese language). The interpretation of requests varies depending on a range of social and contextual factors (see, for example, Fraser and Nolen 1981; Gumperz 1982; Culpeper 1996; Spencer-Oatey 2000; Mills 2003). For instance, requests in emergency telephone calls, commercial service encounters as well as police-citizens encounters are a routine activity that helps to shape interactional roles and identities and are thus typically considered non-threatening in these communicative environments (e.g. Zimmerman 1984, 1992; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005; Heinemann 2005; Lindström 2005; Curl and Drew 2008; Márquez Reiter 2011). Similarly, in police discourse requests are deployed as interactional devices through which TPOs project their institutional power and authority and not necessarily interpreted as threatening behaviour (Shon 2005; Ervin-Tripp 1976; Bax 1986).

The conversational resources employed in the second pair part of requests have also been researched (see Clark and Schunk 1980). Responses to requests have been analysed from a conversation analytic perspective in terms of their linguistic features, preference organisation and adjacency relationship (Taleghani-Nikazm 2006; Schegloff 2007). For instance, the sequential structure of requests and their second parts with respect to alignment, cooperative attributes and affiliation have been extensively examined (e.g. Heritage 1984; Keisanen and Rauniomaa 2012; Kent 2012). It has been suggested that the preferred response to requests is granting compliance as it is oriented to promoting social solidarity (Heritage 1984) thereby minimizing the interpersonal sensitivities associated with the activity. Similarly, their dispreferred responses were found to have structural features such as hedging and hesitation elements (e.g. Heritage 1984; Pomerantz 1984; Schegloff 2007) contingent on request format i.e. whether they are “immediate” and “deferred” (Linstrom 2005).

In addition, talk-in-interaction analysts have demonstrated that the linguistic and syntactic formulation of requests and their responses could be linked to the linguistic formulations of FPPs as well as participants’ interpretation and knowledge of the context in which the request occurs (Curl and Drew 2008). For example, in the context of service encounters, Vinkhuyzen and Szymanski (2005) found that the way non-granting responses were formulated largely depends on the structure of initial requests produced by shop employees. Moreover, speakers can select a turn design that indicates their orientation to their entitlement in making the request and to the contingencies that may be involved in the recipient granting the request or not (Heinmann 2006). Thus conventionalised request formats such as ‘can/could you’ in English have been shown to display the requester’s claim to the right of having his or her request granted (Curl and Drew 2008). In a similar vein, the turn design of requests in Russian, characterised by a smaller frequency of supportive moves e.g. grounders, has been associated with speakers’ orientation to their entitlement to issue a request and expect compliance in return because of the situational context (see, for example, Ogiermann 2009).

In terms of its design, the request - response sequence can be influenced by the interactants’ disaffiliative stance and the deployment of counters. Counters are deeply embedded in the sequential organisation of talk-in-interaction and can be defined as an alternative to second pair parts (SPPs) which defers a relevant SPP (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 2007). The observed effect from a counter is that instead of “responding with an SPP to the just completed FPP, the same FPP (or a closely related modification of it) is redirected to the one who just did it” (Schegloff 2007, 17).

Moreover, counters “reverse the direction of constraint” set by so-called relevance rules that project particular SPPs as more appropriate, thus limiting the actions that recipient could do (Schegloff 2007). So by launching a counter, interactants infringe on the relevance rules by “not doing” the action that was predetermined by the initial turn (Schegloff 2007). This is in line with the observation that counters reverse the direction of a sequence by cancelling the relevance of the initially launched FPP and removing the requirement to provide a SPP (Liddicoat 2011).

In studies of argumentation, it has been observed that this move referred to as “format tying” entails the manipulation of the previous utterance reusing its features and structure (through parallelism, exact repetition, paraphrasing) to produce a next, counter to it, in order to top what the first speaker said and make status claims (Goodwin and Goodwin 1987; see also, Corsaro and Maynard 1996; Goodwin 2002, 2006). Put simply, by repeating or recycling some elements of the prior talk disputants manage to “shape the trajectory of sequence in quite a different way” by reversing “the agent of the proposed action” (Goodwin and Goodwin 1987, 218; Liddicoat 2011, 142). Eisenberg and Garvey (1981) suggested that counter-requests could be seen as a strategy that ultimately shifts functional roles inasmuch as a requestee becomes a requestor. Markee (1995) showed how counter-questions (CQs) in a classroom context were deployed to promote language learning. He argued that CQs defined who sets the agenda and content of talk in a classroom. Additionally, CQ turns were found to illustrate unequal power distribution relationships in the classroom suggesting that pupils are not permitted to act as teachers (Markee 1995, 2004).

On the whole, counters can be seen as alternative second turns in adjacency pairs that reverse the direction of conversation, that act as disaffiliative, non-complying responsive actions. This is because they can only be deemed acceptable when asked by someone of higher or at least equal authority (Eisenberg and Garvey 1981; Hale 2004, 181; Thompson et al. 2015). This is thus a strategy that participants may employ to display their oppositional stance as well as antagonistic orientation (Jaffe 2009). Indeed, CQs were suggested to challenge the relevance of a question asked, the authority of the first speaker, thus infringing on the institutional rules that govern relationship between interactants (Ilie 1994). CQs could also indicate reluctance to respond and cooperate as well as question stalling, blocking or simply challenging the speaker (Minchin 2002). Our data show that TPOs requests for ID were frequently mirrored by the drivers as means of challenging the TPO (cf. Goodwin and Goodwin 1987, 219), often in a jocular manner. In the data at hand, the TPOs’ requests for ID (FPP) make conditionally relevant the driver’s compliance with the request (SPP) (cf. Hutchby and Wooffit 1998, 42; Levinson



1983, 306 for normative expectations of adjacency pairs). The driver, however, does not ratify the projected SPP and instead redirects the same request for identification to the officer, thus reversing the anticipated “direction of the sequence and its flow” (Schegloff 2007, 17).

Thus from structural point of view, counters represent a form of overt opposition that not only creates a “challenge to the content of the preceding utterance, but also challenges the authority of the previous speaker” (Church 2012, 19; Goodwin and Goodwin 1987) thus creating fertile ground for the emergence of interpersonally sensitive situations.

### **3. Data and methodology**

This study focuses on five naturally occurring interactions which best illustrate the phenomena under discussion. They were drawn from a corpus of 12 video clips (approximately 50 minutes long), recorded by the drivers via cameras mounted on their cars’ dashboards, and subsequently uploaded by them to YouTube. The episodes were carefully selected based on the presence of the TPOs’ requests for identification and citizens’ counters, particularly when interlocutors oriented to these communicative activities as interpersonally delicate.

The examination of requests and counters will be approached from an interactional discursive perspective informed by research on (im)politeness. It will pay attention to the way in which face manifestations and identity configurations are enacted in the social practices that the interactional participants engage in (Blitvich 2013; Haugh 2013; Kádár & Márquez Reiter 2015). To this end, the article draws on the notion of activity (Levinson 1979), face threat and aggravation (Goffman 1967) and elements from Conversation Analysis to capture how these activities are interactionally managed and the way in which the participants, especially the TPOs, orient to them as interpersonally delicate, including Zimmerman’s (1998) distinction between discourse, situational, and transportable identities.

According to Zimmerman (1998), discourse identities are the interactional, turn-generated roles that interlocutors continuously assume and leave in talk-in-interaction, e.g. questioner-answerer, story teller-story recipient and the like and are thus rooted in the ‘proximal context’, that is, in the local interaction. Situational identities, the second layer of identity work, are shaped by the institutional, ‘distal’ context and project assumptions about the activity type and the role expectations, in our case that of the TPOs and drivers. On a third level are ‘transportable identities’, that is larger, latent identities

-such as age, gender, ethnicity- that people carry across different contexts and which might be explicitly oriented to or tacitly apprehended in the local interaction.

The interactions have been transcribed following standard conversational analytic conventions (Jefferson 2004). Thus, a line in Russian, gloss in English and idiomatic English translation have been included. Additionally, for ethical reasons personal details which could help identify the participants have been omitted from the transcripts, although the encounters are publicly available.

#### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

Our corpus of five encounters contains four instances where the driver challenges the TPO's request for identification. In assuming the discourse identity of questioner by launching a request to see the driver's license, the TPO makes relevant his situational identity as an official with institutional rights and powers vested in the highway code of practice. The TPO's request requires the driver to assume the discourse identity of a 'request complier'/'answerer' (Pomerantz and Mandelbaum 2005) in order to ratify the standardised relational pair of situational identities (TPO and driver) with their respective rights and obligations. Standardised relational pairs are paired identities with rights and obligations to each other, where one identity makes programmatically relevant the other, e.g. husband and wife, teacher and student (Sacks 1995, 326).

Given the nature of institutionalised encounters between TPOs and drivers, the issuing of a request for ID could be qualified as an activity through which the officer manifests his institutional face and expects ratification in the form of the driver's compliance. Moreover, the very act of stopping the car may imply that a driver has potentially committed an infraction and may thus jeopardize the driver's face and also have financial repercussions for him.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, manifestations of face surface in the way the drivers react to the requests. By responding with a counter-request for identification the drivers challenge the officers' situational identities and associated attributions that the TPOs make relevant, through the activity of stopping the car and requesting ID (Schegloff 1967 in Schegloff 1991; Whalen and Zimmerman 1991). The TPOs orientations towards counters suggest that this discursive behaviour is oriented to as face threatening and in breach of the norms that underlie TPO-driver encounters. Excerpt 1, below, illustrates this.

#### **Excerpt 1:**

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that all TPOs and drivers in the dataset are male.

The encounter depicts a situation where the driver sets the dash camera to face the window, which is subsequently lowered; after approaching the car, the officer introduces himself and asks for identification.

p = traffic police officer

d = driver

- 1 p: Zdravstvuite  
Good afternoon  
Good afternoon
- 2 d: Zdrast'e  
Hello  
**Hello ((coll.))**
- 3 p: Dokumenty (voditel'skoe udostoverenie)  
documents driving licence  
((show me your)) documents (driving licence)
- 4 d: A vashi mozhno posmotret' dokumenty=  
but your may see documents  
**But may I see your documents first**
- 5 p: =↑Shto shto?  
What what  
=↑**What what?**
- 6 d: Vashi mozhno posmotret'  
Yours may see  
**may I see yours**
- 7 p: A chto ja ne pohoZh na sotrudnika?  
but what i not look like official  
**but don't I look like an officer?**
- 8 d: Nu a ja chto ne pohoZh na↑voditelja?  
PRT but I what not look like driver  
**well don't I look like a driver?**

In Excerpt 1, after the opening adjacency pair of reciprocal greetings (lines1-2), the TPO launches a request for ID (line 3). The driver, however, 'sequentially deletes' (Jefferson 1978) the request, as he

does not ratify the projected discourse identity of request responder. Instead, he launches a counter-request indicating (discourse) identity misalignment. The driver, consequently, assumes a new situational identity which is not aligned with the one projected by the TPO: that of a 'disputant' who challenges the TPO's authority, thus potentially setting the ground for confrontation. The counter-request is received by the TPO with an open repair initiator '*what what?*' (line 5). Although the high level of background noise in the video could suggest that this is a request for clarification, due to mishearing, we would argue that this next-turn repair initiator (Schegloff 1992; Drew 1997) is actually a face-saving attempt by the TPO to contest the driver's counter and the ensuing discourse and situational identities. This becomes evident in line 7, where the officer's reactions indicate, on the one hand, apprehension of the driver's counter-request (in line 4) and, on the other, reluctance to comply with it, thus dismissing the driver's right to assume the discourse identity of requester.

The TPO attempts to navigate through this negotiation of power, discourse and situational identities, by making explicitly relevant his membership to the situational identity of TPO (line 7). Additionally, the rhetorical question in line 7 indicates the officer's orientation to his own actions and appearance as sufficient attributes for legitimising membership to the identity of TPO (and discourse identity of requester) and for delegitimising the driver's repeated counter-request. Nevertheless, as it can be inferred from the transcript, the utterance failed to produce any effect on the driver who assumes an argumentative stance and escalates a potential conflict further. This is observed by format tying (e.g. Corsaro and Maynard 1996) in line 8 where the driver reuses the TPO's prior utterance by initiating his turn with 'well', thus marking a causal connection between his turn and the TPO's preceding contribution. In the subsequent interaction a compromise is reached: the driver shows his ID momentarily and only reveals it fully once the TPO has revealed his own ID. The TPO protects his professional face by not having to be the first to reveal his ID – and thus legitimises the driver's counter request and contestation of his authority- and the driver pursues and achieves compliance with his counter-request.

This episode indicates how a counter request and the drivers' adoption of discourse identities other than the one projected by the TPO is explicitly linked with the non-ratification of the TPO's situational identity, destabilizes power relations and represents an instance of social actors contesting each other's authority, making face-related concerns interactionally visible. The way the counter was managed suggests that this behaviour was treated as problematic, asserted through the TPOs attempts to initiate a repair of the counter (lines 5, 7) and explicit reference to specific attributions (i.e. uniform) which are

bound to the TPOs situational identity (line 7), while at the same time not switching to a different topic. Nevertheless, the driver's counter requests (line 4, 6) as well as the further exploration of format tying (line 8) could signal an attempt to damage the TPO's professional face and contest power by implying that category-related attributes such as stopping the car, wearing a police uniform or issuing requests are not an "*ipso facto* guarantee" of institutional credentials (Schegloff 1991, 60-61), or in Jayyusi's (1984, 45) terms, are not attributions *constitutive* of the TPO's situational identity.

Excerpt 2 shows another instance where the articulation and subsequent non-alignment of situational identities are achieved by making a request for ID and a counter request.

### **Excerpt 2:**

The encounter depicts a situation where the driver is lowering a window after being stopped by the TPO. After a number of confrontational turns regarding the reason why the car was stopped, the officer asks for identification.

p = traffic police officer

d = driver

- 1 P: u vas est' dokumenty=  
with you are documents  
**do you have documents=**
- 2 D: = est' (.) pokazhite snachala vashi dokumenty  
are show first your documents  
**= I do (.) show me your documents first**
- 3 P: =s chego vdrug  
from what suddenly  
**=why so**
- 4 D: Nu: (.) ja zh ne znajukto vy (.) ja perepishu vashi dannye  
PRT I but not know who you i will note+down your information  
**Well (.) but I don't know who you are (.) I will note down information about you**
- 5 P: (2) ne ponjal  
Not understood  
**(2) didn't get it**
- 6 D: Nupredostav'te dokumenty, popjatoistat'ezakona o militsii vy objazany srazu  
pred''javit' mne svoi dokumenty

Provide documents according fifth article law+of+police you obliged immediately demonstrate your documents

**Um show me your documents according to the fifth article of the police law you must show me your documents immediately**

7 P: Ugu pozhaluista vashi dokumenty-  
PRT please your documents  
**Uh-huh please ((show me)) your documents-**

At line 1, the TPO issues a request for ID via the indirect question '*do you have documents?*'. Its literal meaning was picked up by the driver who, firstly, aligned with his projected discourse identity of answerer by responding positively: '*I do*' (line 2). Nevertheless, although the citizen understands the question as a 'pre-request' (ten Have 2007, 131) to show his documents as is evident from his counter-request in line 2, he does not ratify the projected discourse identity of request complier. Instead, he produces a FPP in the form of a counter-request for ID. By doing so, the driver shifts situational identities: from doing a cooperative driver to doing a challenging one, thus challenging the legitimacy of the situational identity of the TPO. The TPO indicates his dispreference at his contested situational identity, through assuming the discourse identity of 'repair initiator', with the justification request '*why so?*' (line 3).

In return, the driver further escalates his challenge by explicitly questioning the legitimacy of the TPO's situational identity (line 4) and threatening his professional face. This counter is also followed by a verbalized intention to note down the TPO's personal details, presumably including the officer's personal identification number, which, if went viral, could potentially infringe on his privacy. The pause at the beginning of line 5 and the subsequent next turn repair initiator '*didn't get it*' (l.5) display the officer orientation to the previous utterance as troublesome or inappropriate (Schegloff et al. 1977, Davidson 1984, 103). Nevertheless, the driver continues his 'line' by repeating his request, additionally invoking the extra-situational i.e. transportable identity of a 'knowledgeable citizen' (Zimmerman 1998), pointing his identity-bound rights (allegedly) vested in the legal code. The officer, nevertheless, in line 7, sequentially deletes the driver's recycled counter-request and thus dis-attends to the contestation of his situational identity by pursuing a 'routine footing' (Zimmerman 1998, 89). In other words, the TPO only ratifies the projected discourse identities (and SPPs) that are in line with the relational pair of situational identities TPO-cooperative driver.

This interaction continues for five more minutes of video footage. The driver and TPO continue with an exchange of several FPPs of (counter)requests for identification that are not complied with, both parties

make explicitly relevant their legal rights. This shows both participants' heightened interest in pursuing their chosen (and incompatible) situational identities. Finally, the TPO, with the assistance of a second TPO, launches a car inspection procedure, by checking the car's number plates. The video-recording ends while the driver waits for the completion of the car inspection. This extract illustrates how the TPO's face and identity are repeatedly confronted by several interpersonally sensitive activities: the officer's request was ignored, subsequently countered, furnished though the non-alignment of situational identities, and finally the legitimacy of the TPO's situational identity and associated attributions were explicitly questioned. In line with the previous episode, the driver makes relevant that the officer's actions and characteristics (e.g. uniform) do not suffice in legitimising his situational identity. The TPO, on the other hand, protects his threatened professional face and pursues his institutional power and the unequal nature of the encounter (Fairclough 1989) by rejecting the discourse identities that the driver projects onto him, either through initiating next-turn repairs or through sequentially deleting the driver's just prior turn.

The next episode represents another example of how non-alignment unfolds and is oriented-to in interaction. In keeping with the previous excerpt, identity ascription is invoked through reference to rights and obligations, contingently associated with members' situational identities.

### **Excerpt 3:**

The video shows a driver overtaking a traffic police car on a highway. There were repeated warnings uttered via a loudspeaker not to exceed the speed and that the officer will have to stop the car, initially ignored by the driver. Later the car is stopped by another TPO who has, most probably, been informed about the aforementioned infraction. Following a number of confrontational turns, where the request to show ID was countered, the officer whose car was overtaken in the beginning of the episode approaches the vehicle. This is the opening sequence.

p = traffic police officer

d = driver

- 1 p: Zdravstvuite(.)komandir devjatogo batal'jona polkovnik SURNAME pred''javlaite dokumenty  
hello commander of+ninth battalion colonel surname show documents  
**hello (.) commander of the ninth battalion colonel SURNAME ((mentions his surname)) show me your documents**
- 2 d: A vy mozhetе pred''javit' sluzhebnoe udosto[verenie=  
**but you can show official certificate**  
**but can you show your official identifi[cation**
- 3 p: [dokumenty svoi pred''javl]jaite [eto vasha prjamaja objazannost'-

documents you show it your direct responsibility

**[show me your documents**

**[this is your direct responsibility-**

4 d: [( )-

5 d: ja soglasen eto moja objazannost' [(mne nuzhno predjavit' udostoverenie)]

I agree this my responsibility me need show ID

**I agree this is my responsibility [(I need to show ID)]**

6 p: [da ja vam predstavilsja ( )]

but I you introduced

**[but I introduced myself to you ( )]**

7 d: [( )]

p: [Udostoverenie pokazat?

ID show

**Should I show you my ID?**

8 d: vy mne pokazhite pozhaluista svoe sluzhebnoe udostoverenie

You me show please your official ID

**show me your official ID please**

Here, the TPO's initial greeting is not followed by a SPP (reciprocal greeting), but instead a silence attributable to the driver ensues. This offers an early manifestation of the engendered misalignment to each other's projected identities and face-threatening nature of the encounter. In response to the driver's silence, the police officer offers a 'categorical self-identification' (Zimmerman 1992, 1998) i.e. rank, battalion's number and name. This identity 'pre-alignment' device (Zimmerman 1998, 97) makes relevant the rights and obligations associated with the standardised relational pair TPO-citizen and functions as a preface to the TPO's request in the same turn. Unlike previous examples, when the situational identity of the TPOs was explicitly made relevant only once the driver projected the identity of disputant, here the TPO seems to anticipate the potential non-ratification of his situational identity, partly because of the driver's attributable silence after his initial greeting, and engages in pre-emptive facework (Goffman 1967) to protect his professional face. In line with the previous examples, the driver revises the projected situational identity of the officer, and assumes an alternative identity of a disputant through a counter-request (line 2).

The officer does not assume the projected discourse identity of request respondent thus indexing that such activity is not contextually appropriate. In fact, the TPO makes once again relevant the relational pair of situational identities through explicitly casting the activity of producing documents as bound to



the situational identity of a (law-abiding) driver (line 3). Furthermore, the TPO's orientation to the counter, i.e. the request repetition, indicates the face-threatening nature of the driver's actions and the officer's vested interest in guarding his own status as a legitimate incumbent of the law enforcement agency. Unlike previous examples, where the TPO would ignore the counter-request, here the TPO attends to the driver's counter-request, through offering an account (line 6) and a FPP (line 7) in an insertion sequence in the counter-request/response adjacency pair. Thus, the TPO seems to attend to the driver's discourse identity of counter-requester and situational identity of 'disputant'. It is unsurprising, then, that in the upcoming talk, following a repetition of the driver's counter request, the TPO actually shows his ID, providing the SPP that the driver projects to his counter-request (and then the driver finally complies with the TPOs request for identification).

That in this incident the driver has already committed an infraction before he was stopped might have contributed to the fact that the TPO ratified the driver's situational identity as disputer and discourse identity as counter-requester from the beginning of the interaction. This extract further substantiates the very close link between sequential organisation and discourse identities (often rooted in the positions interactants adopt and ascribe to others in adjacency pairs), on the one hand, and situational identities on the other.

In the next extract, we can see evidence that instances of non-alignment and non-ratification do not only mark a complex interplay between situational and discourse identities, but they also trigger the explicit orientation to transportable identities in interaction.

#### **Excerpt 4:**

The TPO stops the car and proceeds to approach it. After the driver sets the dash camera to face the window, the officer approaches the car and asks for identification.

p = traffic police officer

d = driver

g = passenger in the car

1     p:           Kapitan politsii SURNAME dokumenty=  
                  Captain of+police SURNAME documents  
                  **captain of police SURNAME((show me your)) documents**

2     d:           =a chto sluchilos'  
                  but what did+happen  
                  **=but what happened**

- 3 p: Za prevyshenie skorosti  
for exceeding speed  
**you've exceeded speed limits=**
- 4 d: (.)prevyshenie skoros[ti?  
exceeding speed  
**=exceeded the speed li[mit?**
- 5 p: [Da::  
yes  
[ye::s
- 6 g: Kogdazh on uspel?=  
when but he managed  
**but when did he manage?=((to exceed a speed limit))**
- 7 d: =Ja tol'ko shto s povorota vyehal inspektor  
I only from turn did+come officer  
**=I just came out from the turn officer**
- 8 p: da a ty otkuda, kto ty?  
Well but you from+where who you  
**well but where are you(T) from, who are you(T)? ((looking inside the car))**
- 9 d: Vsmysle kto ja  
mean who I  
**what do you mean who I am**
- 10 p: Ty otkuda, s kakogo kolkhoza sovkh[oz-  
from+where from which collective+farm soviet+farm  
**where are you(T) from, from which kolkhoz sovkh[oz-**
- 11 g: [Otsjuda  
From+here  
**[From here**
- 12 p: u- otsjudova=  
From+here  
U- from here (coll.)=
- 13 =dokumenty est' u tebjja

documents iswith you  
=do you(T) have documents

14 g: [( )]-

15 p: [( )]-

As in the previous extracts, the encounter starts with categorical self-identification and a request for ID (line 1). Again in this case, the citizen did not ratify the projected discourse identity of a request complier, and invoked a new discourse identity of ‘questioner’ (line 2), orienting towards the situational identity of law-abiding driver/innocent/unaware that an infraction may have been committed. Contrary to counter-requests, where the TPO would not (at least initially) ratify the projected discourse identity, here the TPO actually ratifies the projected discourse identity of answerer, while simultaneously projecting a different discourse identity for himself as ‘accuser’ and that of ‘accused’ for driver (line 3). The driver maintains the oppositional stance through format tying (repetition of the previous utterance albeit with a different intonation) in line 4 thus further indexing non-alignment with the projected identity of the rightly accused. At the same time, the driver ratifies the relational pair of situational identities of ‘accused citizen’ and TPO, by assuming related discourse identities (e.g. account giver in line 7) and also through explicit categorical reference ‘officer’/inspektor in his term of address in line 7.

In line 8 the TPO returns to the discourse identity of requester for identification, treating lines 2-7 as insert expansion to the overarching adjacency pair of request for identification-compliance. Once the driver responds to the second request for identification with the insertion of a next turn repair initiator (line 9), the TPO’s third request is coupled with an enquiry about the driver’s locational information: ‘*where are you from, from which kolkhoz sovkhhoz?*’<sup>2</sup>(line 10). In referring to this locational formulation,<sup>3</sup> the TPO makes explicitly relevant the driver’s transportable identity of an ‘outsider’, hence, being unaware of local rules and regulations. In this context it could be said that the driver’s non-ratification of the projected discourse identity of request complier may have acted as ‘contextualisation cue’ (Gumperz, 1992) for the TPO in inferring reasons for this inappropriate conduct.

Subsequently, the officer’s request to show documents invokes a reaction, routinely encountered in the dataset, namely the counter-request at line 18:

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<sup>2</sup>Kolkhoz – Russian abbreviation for soviet ‘kollektivnoje khozjaistvo’ (‘collective farm’).Sovkhhoz – Russian short form for ‘sovetskoe khozjaistvo’ (a soviet farm).

<sup>3</sup>Locational formulations are geographical locations that provide the context for the activation of membership categories and category-bound activities (see e.g., Hester and Eglin 1997, 9; Silverman 1998, 133).

- 16 d: [Konechno est'  
certainly are  
**[certainly I do**
- 17 p: Pokazhite pozhaluista  
show please  
**show(V) it please**
- 18 d: A mozhn ouvidet'( ) vashi dokumenty  
but may your documents  
**but may I see your(V) documents**
- 19 p: (.) SLUSHAI MOZGI NE DELAJ DAVAJ VYHODI RAZ TAKOJ DELOVOJ blja, A NU [VYHODI  
listen(T) brains not do let go+out if so impudent damn+it PRT go+out  
**(.)LISTEN(T) DON'T MESS WITH MY HEAD GO OUT (T) IF YOU'RE (T) SO IMPUDENT damn  
it,((opening the door)) [GO OUT (T)**
- 20 d: [ ( nu rasslab'tes')  
PRT relax  
[ (C'mon relax (V))
- 21 p: ( )↑sopljak ( )  
sucker  
( )↑**sucker** ( )  
  
((the driver is going out from the car))
- 22 p: dvadtsat' pjat' let v gai rabotai mozhno vashi dokumenty govorish TEBE SKOL'KO LET?=  
twenty five years in road+police work can your documents say your how+many years  
**after having worked for twenty five years in the road police someone is asking can I see your  
documents, HOW OLD ARE YOU?**
- 23 d: =Inspector (ne nuzhno)-  
officer not needed  
**officer (no need)-**

The response to the driver's counter-request, in line 18, is markedly emotive with a rise in volume and the TPO achieves re-establishing his institutional power by assuming and ascribing to his interlocutor a number of discourse, situational and transportable identities. In particular, the TPO assumes the discourse identities of 'questioner': 'how old are you?' and 'accuser': 'sucker', reiterates his membership

to his situational identity (working for gai<sup>4</sup>) and also makes relevant his transportable identity (age), in lines 21 and 22. In addition, in lines 21 and 22, the TPO explicitly activates the driver's transportable identity related to the categorisation device 'age', making relevant the 'contrast pair' (McKinlay and Dunnett 1998; Housley and Fitzgerald 2009) of identities young/old and thus concurrently categorising himself and the driver as old(er) and young(er). The categorisation device age is here oriented to as a collection of hierarchically positioned categories, where 'old' has higher status than 'young' (cf. Sacks 1995 for a discussion of the categorisation device age in other contexts). By referring to the transportable identities of age the TPO emphasises the inappropriateness of the driver's assumed discourse identities (especially counter-requester). Interestingly, the driver is quick to reinforce the TPO's situational identity and associated status, through his term of address in line 23, indicating the force of the invocation of the categorisation device age.

The explicit reference to transportable identities is closely related to face-related issues. It indicates the TPO's attempt to defend his professional 'face', which has been threatened by the driver. Therefore, the invocation of transportable identities (rurality and age) are employed to further legitimise the TPO's situational identity as a police officer, representative of the law enforcement agency as well as his discourse identity of someone who is entitled to request identification. This is further substantiated by the use of singular personal pronoun 'ty' (T-form) in lines 8, 10, 13, 19 instead of the formal 'vy' (V-form), as well as the deployment of imperative form of verbs referring to second person singular (T-form) in line 19. These linguistic choices make relevant the higher level of social distance, power and formality, index a shift in register and confirm the TPO's orientation to the age asymmetry rendering the citizen's contestation to the TPO's discourse and situational identities non permissible (Friedrich 1972; Wade 1992; Perelmutter 2010). For the remainder of the encounter the TPOs continues attacking the driver as 'shameless', before moving away from the camera.

## **5. Concluding remarks**

Despite the fact that the TPO - citizen encounters are characterised by a specific set of roles, expectations and goals governing behaviours considered appropriate, participants were frequently found to pursue their own seemingly incompatible agendas (Goffman 1961). In the data at hand, contestation of identities, roles and power was particularly prominent in the production of requests and

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<sup>4</sup>GAI – abbreviation from Gosudarstvennaja Razvedyvatel'naja Inspekcija: State Motor Vehicle Inspectorate.

their counters, which, in the Russian context of TPO - citizen encounters, constitute face threatening and interpersonally sensitive activities. Interpersonally sensitive activities are actions in which the vulnerability of the participants' face or their identities, especially those of the TPOs are made interactionally manifest, often impeding sequence progressivity and more generally, truncating the trajectory of the interactional event. They thus potentially jeopardise the social cohesion necessary for interactional goal achievement, in this case for the TPOs to efficiently fine the drivers.

We have seen how drivers' counter-requests for identification constitute conflict-sensitive behaviour that resists and questions the officers' professional role, and authority. In return, officers routinely dis-attended to such counter requests. They did this through sequential deletion, repair initiation and request repetition, in an attempt to switch back to the 'routine footing' and re-align asymmetrical identities that would guard their own status as legitimate incumbents of the law enforcement agency. The analysis also revealed that self- and other-ascription of discourse identities at the interactional level is intimately linked with the mobilisation of various identity membership categories, both situational (official, driver, commander, captain of police, officer, etc.) and transportable (related to age and locality). It was shown (i.e. Excerpt 4) that transportable identities were employed by the TPO to escalate disputes, when dis-attending to the driver's repeated counter-request was no longer sustainable.

On the whole, the interactional organisation of counter-requests shows that they are treated as face threatening and in breach of 'expected background' assumptions, thus revealing the delicate nature of this type of social encounter (Garfinkel 1984). Such marked behaviour is inference rich and could be in line with the established negative attitudes of public citizens towards the State officials in general and specifically towards the traffic police representatives (Gudkov 2000; Griaznova 2007). In other words, the close analysis of these encounters, depicted in the YouTube videos, offered us a glimpse of power struggles and actions of resistance to perceived levels of corruption on Russian roads.

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