

Discourse in *Zapiski iz podpol'ia*: Linguistic and Meta-linguistic Elements

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This article will focus on the peculiarities of Dostoevsky's double-voiced polyphonic discourse (as conceptualized by Mikhail Bakhtin) in *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* (1864) and on certain linguistic and meta-linguistic elements involved in the creation of that discourse. The notion of polyphony with regard to Dostoevsky was developed by Bakhtin in *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (1963).¹ Bakhtin defines polyphony as “множественность самостоятельных и неслиянных голосов и сознаний” and writes that it is the main peculiarity of Dostoevsky's novels (7). He also states that the double-voiced discourse inevitably appears in dialogic conversation and is a main subject of study of meta-linguistics (315). In distinguishing “pure” linguistics from meta-linguistics, Bakhtin writes that the latter embraces dialogic relationships, including the relationship of the speaker to the discourse (*slovo*) (311) and the dialogicality of the remarks, whereas “pure” linguistics studies language in its abstraction from various aspects of the concrete life of the word (309-12).

In the chapter “Geroi i pozitsiia avtora po otnosheniiu k geroiu v tvorchestve Dostoevskogo,” Bakhtin argues that Dostoevsky is interested in character insofar as the character offers a special viewpoint on the world and himself (79). Thus polyphony is formed by voices of characters, or by different viewpoints. It is noteworthy that in *Zapiski* different and contradictory viewpoints often belong to one and the same character: “Я ведь вовсе *не для оправдания* моего сейчас столько наговорил. . . . Я именно себя оправдать хотел” (*Zapiski* [1973] 127; emphasis added). This is one of many examples in which the underground man represents several voices.

The dominant function of the underground man is the function of speech. He is also an extremely introspective character; his narcissism “places” him in the center of the world. Thus he tends to express his viewpoint on the world primarily with regard to himself and to speak about himself most of all. The underground man clearly states at the very beginning of *Zapiski*: “[О] чем может говорить порядочный человек с наибольшим удовольствием? Ответ: о

себе. Ну так и я буду говорить о себе” (*Zapiski* [1973] 101). The scope of this article does not allow for close textual analysis of the entire book. Rather, I shall analyze *Zapiski*’s textual elements on the basis of Chapter 5, the central chapter of the book’s first part, known for its lack of plot. Because of this feature, the chapter is particularly susceptible to the influence of meta-linguistics.

In form, the text of the chapter is a single passage two pages in length; it is what Bakhtin calls “narrator’s narration” (рассказ рассказчика), in which the author’s discourse is replaced by the discourse of the narrator (*Problemy poetiki* 325). Bakhtin affirms that narrator’s narration is analogous to stylization and says that Dostoevsky’s characters—chroniclers—develop the narration in the forms of literary discourse (литературное слово) in contrast to the narrator’s narration in the forms of colloquial speech (в формах устной речи), that is, in the form of *skaz*, in the strict sense of the word (325). In narrator’s narration, the author uses the verbal manner of “the other” as a point of view, a “position” that the author needs for carrying on the story (325). The stylization, in turn, presupposes style, that is, it presupposes that the sum of stylistic devices, which it reproduces, once had a direct and immediate meaning (323-24). The stylizer *uses another’s discourse as the other*, and this casts a slight shadow of objectivity over the latter discourse, which, however, does not become objective (324). The objectivity of discourse in narrator’s narration is much stronger than in stylization, but narrator’s discourse can never be purely objective (325). The twofold direction towards both another’s discourse—someone else’s speech—and the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, is characteristic of all meta-linguistic types studied by Bakhtin: stylization, parody, *skaz*, and dialogue (316).² Bakhtin states that this twofold directedness of the discourse is beyond the scope of stylistic and linguistic investigation (317). This was true for the linguistics of the time when Bakhtin wrote his book on Dostoevsky; however, contemporary linguistics, especially pragmatics and discourse analysis, pays particular attention to discourse and its directedness.³

In what follows I describe and classify the most significant or frequently recurring linguistic elements in chapter 5, among which are interrogative sentences (syntax), direct speech (syntax), pronouns (morphology), and verbs in the first person (morphology and semantics). I also demonstrate how these linguistic elements are related to meta-linguistics, if at all. It is important that Bakhtin believed that in practice the boundaries between linguistics and meta-linguistics are

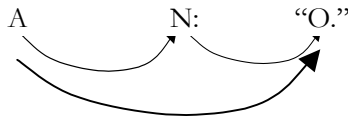
very often violated (310). Thus there may be instances in which textual elements function as both linguistic and meta-linguistic.

Chapter 5 begins with a rhetorical question: “Ну разве можно, разве можно хоть сколько-нибудь уважать себя человеку, который даже в самом чувстве собственного уважения посягнул отыскать наслаждение?” (*Zapiski* [1926] 118). Six more interrogative sentences that occur in the text of the chapter hint at the possible addressee, assist in creating textual dynamics, and, moreover, may be regarded as features of colloquial discourse, *skaz*.⁴ It is noteworthy that for Bakhtin the main characteristic of *skaz* is that it is directed towards the speech of the other (327).

The structure of the second question includes a remark in direct speech that has a direct address: *папаша* (Bakhtin 327). Therefore, presence of the other in the discourse of the underground man becomes obvious. In addition, the use of this address testifies to a shift in style, a change in register from neutral to colloquial. Bakhtin believes that the role of the address is particularly important for Dostoevsky's art in general; he also states that the discourse of the underground man is entirely a discourse-address (407). Moreover, this sentence contains what Bakhtin calls microdialogue: “Да и вообще терпеть я не мог говорить: ‘Простите, папаша, вперед не буду’, — не потому, чтоб я не способен был это сказать, а напротив, может быть, именно потому, что уж слишком способен на это бывал, да еще как?” (*Zapiski* [1973] 107). The dialogical relations, says Bakhtin, can penetrate a single utterance, or even a single word, if two voices are dialogically opposed within it (315). These two voices form a microdialogue. In the interrogative sentence mentioned above, two (if not three or four) different voices are opposed: one begins the sentence, the second is in the form of direct speech, and the last part of the sentence can be subdivided into two voices. Thus this sentence is a rather complex microdialogue.

Bakhtin asserts that direct speech is the most typical and widespread type of objectified discourse. The text with direct speech also has two speech centers and two speech unities within one context: the unity of the author's utterance and the unity of character's utterance. The latter unity is not independent, but is subordinated to the former and included in it (319). The style of the two utterances is different: the character's discourse is stylized as another's discourse, whereas the stylization of the author's discourse emphasizes its direct subject meaning (319). In *Zapiski*, however, the direct speech includes

not the author's utterance but that of the narrator. Both utterances are stylized as another's discourse; the underground man's utterances are stylized as the discourse of the *malen'kii chelovek*, though we can only assume (or believe Dostoevsky) that the underground man's discourse truly represents the stylization of speech of a social type, since the underground man's speech does not differ much (if at all) from the speech of Dostoevsky himself.⁵ *Zapiski* is not, however, the text in which the discourses of the author and the narrator merge; it has a different quality: the stylization of the utterances of the narrator's imaginative opponent is doubled and, therefore, is stronger than that of the narrator:



As for the third interrogative sentence in chapter 5, the structure of it includes neither direct speech nor direct address; however, the other is still present in this sentence, since it contains the verb in the second person plural, the grammatical form that presupposes the use of the second subject: “А спросите, для чего я так сам себя коверкал и мучил?” (*Zapiski* [1926] 118). Dostoevsky omits this subject, thus making the sentence more colloquial, on the one hand, and leaving the addressee unnamed, on the other. Thus, despite Bakhtin's claim that Dostoevsky's chroniclers develop the narration in the forms of literary discourse and not in the forms of colloquial speech, in *Zapiski* there are certain linguistic and meta-linguistic peculiarities that suggest the opposite.

The addressee in this sentence does not have a name, which can be interpreted as proof that s/he is the reader's contemporary.⁶ The omission of a direct address also turns the question into a more universal one; without a direct address it is addressed to everybody, including the reader. The question “Как это объяснить?” is purely rhetorical, whereas the last two questions of the chapter have two personal pronouns in the first person singular, the reflexive pronoun *себя* and the pronoun *меня* in the same form: “Ну а как я, например, себя успокою? Где у меня первоначальные причины, на которые я упрюсь, где основания?” (*Zapiski* [1926] 119; emphasis added). Therefore, these two questions are more introspective than “Как это

объяснить?» for instance. The differences in functions of the interrogative sentences (purely rhetorical or rhetorical, personal, and climactic)⁷ bear witness to stylistic variations that occur in the text.

The use of the personal pronoun in the first person singular (*я*) is particularly important as a grammatical means to create the introspectiveness of a confessional type of *Ich-Erzählung* and confirms that the underground man *is* his consciousness. The following table illustrates the use of *я* in the chapter:

Table 1⁸

118	Я не от приторного какого-нибудь раскаянья так теперь говорю...
118	Да и вообще терпеть я не мог говорить...
118	...не потому, чтоб я неспособен был это сказать...
118	При этом я опять-таки душою умилялся...
118	... я уже с злобою соображаю...
118	А спросите, для чего я так сам себя коверкал и мучил?
118	Я уж об этом упоминал выше.
119	Ну а как я , например, себя успокою?
119	Где у меня первоначальные причины, на которые я упрусь...
119	Откуда я их возьму.
119	Я упражняюсь в мышлении...
119	...давеча вот я говорил о мщении.
119	А ведь я справедливости тут не вижу...
119	я давеча ведь с этого и начал.
119	О, господа, ведь я , может, потому только и считаю себя за умного человека. . .
119	Пусть, пусть я болтун. . .

In addition to the sixteen cases in which *я* is used, the confessional type of *Ich-Erzählung* is also created by the use of forms of *я* in the oblique cases, as well as of reflexive and possessive pronouns in the first person singular. The abundant use of these pronouns also demonstrates the character's reflections and his acute self-consciousness:

Table 2

118	...и, конечно, самого себя надувал...
118	...хотя все-таки законы природы постоянно и более всего всю жизнь меня обижали.
118	...для чего я сам себя ...
118	Сам себе приключения выдумывал и жизнь сочинял...
118	Сколько раз мне случилось...
118	...напустил на себя ...
118	...но до того себя доведешь...
118	Меня как-то всю жизнь тянуло такие штуки выкидывать...
118	...так что уж я стал подконец и в себе не властен...
119	... себя успокою...
119	Где у меня ...
119	...а следственно у меня ...
119	...все мои ⁹ сомнения...
119	...если у меня и злости нет.
119	...Злоба у меня ...
119	...и считаю себя за умного человека...

It is peculiar that the number of cases in which pronouns other than *я*

are used also equals sixteen. Even though the chapter contains the reflexive pronoun *себя*, which refers to a possible opponent or listener of the underground man (*вы себя*), the number of instances in which *себя* is used in relation to the underground man himself prevails (*я себя*).

There are only two instances in which the personal pronoun occurs in the second person plural:

Table 3

118	Страдал, ведь, господа уверяю вас.
119	Вы верно не вникли.

However, one of these two instances can be viewed as an attempt by the speaker to convince himself, which can be seen from a larger section of the text: “Другой раз влюбиться насильно захотел, даже два раза. Страдал ведь, господа, *уверяю* вас. В глубине-то души не *верится*, что страдаешь, насмешка шевелится, а все-таки страдаю” (*Zapiski* [1973] 108; emphasis added). Depending on the reader’s choice, these sentences can be read as representing one of two viewpoints: either it is the underground man who does not believe that he suffers, or it is the *gospoda* who do not. Grammatically, the verb (*не*) *вериться* can refer either to the addresser or to the addressee: *не верится мне* vs. *не верится вам*. This opposition, therefore, can be regarded as an example of what Bakhtin calls the dialogicality of a single word (315). Moreover, this part of the text contains an address to the other, *gospoda*, which again illustrates a shift in style, a change from a neutral to a more personal tone, from literary to colloquial discourse.

The verb form changes from second-person plural to second-person singular by the end of the text, for example: *простите, спросите, замечайте, поймете, вникли* at the beginning and *смотришь, махнешь, попробуй, увлекись, возненавидь, полюби, начнешь, надул* at the end (*Zapiski* [1973] 107-109). This morphological change attests a switch from the formal and polite form of address to an informal and/or less polite one. The logic of the text, however, shows that the addressee of the underground man at the end of the chapter is the underground man himself: “Ну, и рукой махнешь, потому что не нашел первоначальной причины” (*Zapiski* [1926] 119).¹⁰ Thus, if at the beginning of the text the reader can suppose that the other is present in the text, in the last section of the chapter the narrator (the speaker)

and the addressee coincide.

As to the semantics of the verbs in the first person, six sentences with *я* as subject have a verbal predicate denoting an action of speech: *говорю, говорить, сказать, упоминал, говорил, начал (говорить)*. Five sentences with *я* have verbal predicates that describe the narrator's emotional state: *умилялся, коверкал и мучил, успокою, (не) вижу*. Three other verbal predicates refer to the narrator's mental ability: *(со злобой) соображаю, упражняюсь (в мышлении), считаю (себя)*. Hence, in fourteen out of sixteen cases the narrator's action consists of speaking, feeling, or thinking. The only two instances in which the narrator's action does not have this meaning are *упрусь* and *возьму*. However, they are still used figuratively. It is noteworthy that these two predicates, which are unusual for the chapter, convey the idea that is new for the text; they are the first mention of "reasons" and "grounds" that the underground man does not have.

The chapter, featuring as it does an abundance of verbal predicates with the meaning "to speak," concludes with two sentences with the nominal predicates *болтун* and *болтовня*. By using these nominal predicates, Dostoevsky equates *я* and *болтун* in one sentence and *назначение* and *болтовня*. This equation is a result of the syntactic construction involved: "*я есть* (omitted) *болтун?*" and "*назначение есть болтовня.*" Moreover, it seems that Dostoevsky intentionally emphasizes this equation in the last sentence as he preserves the *есть* link verb, which is omitted in standard Russian.

Another peculiarity of the last sentence consists of the use of the personal pronoun *мы*. This is the only instance in the chapter in which the personal pronoun used is in the first-person plural. The use of *мы* implies that the characteristics typical of the underground man become the characteristics of his addressee, that is, not only is he a "chatter-box," but we all are: "Пусть, пусть я болтун, безвредный, досадный болтун, как и все мы." In the last two sentences, the underground man is about to agree that the only thing he does is talk, but he agrees on the condition that everybody is like him. Thus, schematically, the text of the chapter can be presented as follows:

я говорил/говорю	~	вы не вникали
я болтун	~	как и все мы
я болтун	~	мы болтуны

Thus, by the end of his polemic in the chapter, the underground man seems to succeed in persuading his opponent of the fact that the opponent ("господа") is no better than the underground man; they both

do nothing but talking. The discourse of *Zapiski* is what Bakhtin calls a hidden polemic, that is, the discourse directed at an ordinary referential object, which involves naming it, portraying, expressing, and only indirectly striking a blow at the other's discourse (335). Bakhtin emphasizes that this type of discourse is extremely well-spread both in everyday practical speech and in literary speech; moreover, hidden polemic has enormous significance in the formation of style (335). In Bakhtin's opinion, all self-deprecating overblown speech that repudiates itself in advance, speech with a thousand reservations, concessions, loopholes and the like also belongs to the discourses of everyday practical speech. (336). The hidden polemic of the underground man thus belongs to both literary and everyday practical speech. In addition, there are strong elements of confession and biography in *Zapiski*: "это лицо [the underground man] рекомендует самого себя, свой взгляд и... В следующем отрывке придут уже настоящие 'записки' этого лица о некоторых событиях его жизни" (*Zapiski* [1926] 109fn). The hidden polemic, according to Bakhtin, is particularly important for the formation of style in autobiographies and forms of *Ich-Erzählung* of the confessional type (336) and therefore is one of the main characteristics of the style in *Zapiski*. Bakhtin also states that the remark of any real and profound dialogue is analogous to hidden polemic (336). Hence, the hidden polemic is the style-formation element, which brings the confessional *Ich-Erzählung* of the underground man close to dialogue. Therefore, it may be possible to conclude that the text of the first part of *Zapiski* is a monologue from the point of view of linguistics, and a dialogue from the point of view of meta-linguistics.

Bakhtin also differentiates between hidden polemic and hidden dialogicality: "Особенно значительно и важно для наших последующих целей явление скрытой диалогичности, не совпадающее с явлением скрытой полемики" (337). However, a main feature of hidden polemic, as well as of what Bakhtin describes as hidden dialogicality, are both characteristic of *Zapiski*. On the one hand, one of the main features of the hidden polemic, in Bakhtin's view, is overblown, self-deprecating speech, which is certainly typical of the underground man. On the other hand, the speech of the underground man can be viewed as a discourse of hidden dialogicality, that is, in Bakhtin's words—as a dialogue of two persons in which the remarks of the second person are omitted, but omitted in a way that the general meaning is not violated (337). The voice of the narrator in

Zapiski often implies the existence of a second speaker, thus implying the text's dialogicality. For example: "О, скажите, кто это первый объявил, кто первый провозгласил, что человек потому только делает пакости, что не знает настоящих своих интересов; а что если б его просветить...стал бы делать добро?" (*Zapiski* [1973] 110). Dostoevsky's use of typographical symbols to distinguish between separate utterances reinforces, on a purely visual level, the effect of dialogicality:

—А ведь как хорошо в отцовском-то бы доме жить!...

“В тон надо попасть,—мелькнуло во мне,—сентиментальностью-то, пожалуй, не много возьмешь.”

Впрочем, это так только мелькнуло. Клянусь, она и в самом деле меня интересовала....

—Кто говорит! —поспешила я ответить,—всё бывает....

“Черт возьми, да я лъщу. Это гадко. А может, и хорошо...” (*Zapiski* [1973] 156)

In this passage, Dostoevsky plays with direct speech and its graphical symbols; both its visual and textual aspects emphasize the dialogicality of the discourse. In hidden polemic as well as in dialogue, the discourse of the other actively influences the author's discourse and forces it to change according to this influence (Bakhtin 338). Bakhtin calls this type of discourse active, as opposed to the passive discourse of, for instance, stylization and parody (338). Indeed, the discourse of *Zapiski* can be regarded as active:

Выгода! Что такое выгода? Да и берете ли вы на себя совершенно точно определить, в чем именно человеческая выгода состоит? А что если так случится, что человеческая выгода *иной раз* не только может, но даже и должна именно в том состоять, чтоб в ином случае себе худого пожелать, а не выгодного? А если так, если только может быть этот случай, то всё правило прахом пошло. Как вы думаете, бывает ли такой случай? Вы смеетесь; смейтесь, господа, но только отвечайте: совершенно ли верно сосчитаны выгоды человеческие? (*Zapiski* [1973] 110; emphasis in the original)

The speech of the underground man includes a remark about the emotional state of the imaginary other. The laughter of the opponent affects the underground man: he accelerates his speech, as if he does not want to give the last word to his opponent. Bakhtin calls this effect the tendency toward “insane infinity” (*дурная бесконечность*) and says that it is a specific structural peculiarity of the remarks of the underground man (394). Since the second speaker in this dialogue is missing and the underground man is trying to foresee all his possible responses, the dialogue in *Zapiski* can never be finished or finalized (396). The dialogue tends to be unfinished in other works by Dostoevsky as well, for example in *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, *Besy*, etc., but in *Zapiski* the “insane infinity” of dialogue is particularly clear. Bakhtin says that in no subsequent work by Dostoevsky did the formal significance of “insane infinity,” with its inescapable dialogical oppositions, take such a naked, abstractly precise, almost mathematical form (396).

To conclude, the textual analysis of *Zapiski* demonstrates that its linguistic and meta-linguistic elements are closely interrelated and support paradoxical facts regarding Dostoevsky's discourse in this work. Linguistic evidence, in particular the morphology of pronouns and the semantics of verbs, suggest that the text is a confessional type of *Ich-Erzählung* that also exhibits the interrelationships between linguistic and meta-linguistic elements. Some linguistic elements (for instance, addresses and interrogative sentences) confirm the dialogicality of the discourse of *Zapiski*, whereas other linguistic elements, such as the absence of the second speaker in direct speech, suggest that this text, from the point of view of “pure” linguistics, is a monologue. Such meta-linguistic peculiarities of direct speech as hidden polemic and hidden dialogicality confirm the polyphony of the work's double-voiced discourse. The variability of typographical symbols used in *Zapiski* also demonstrates the presence of several interpenetrating voices in the discourse of a single speaker.

Some textual elements function as both linguistic and meta-linguistic. For example, interrogative sentences, including rhetorical questions, are both syntactic units and constituents of hidden polemic and hidden dialogicality. In addition, interrogative sentences are characteristic of *skaz*, which, in Bakhtin's terms, is in most cases introduced in order to bring the voice of the other into the narration. In *Zapiski*, *skaz* appears to be not simply a form of colloquial discourse, since both Dostoevsky and the underground man call the text “notes.” The *skaz* of *Zapiski* is thus a special type of *skaz*, a combina-

tion of colloquial and, at least formally, literary discourses or, according to a different classification by Bakhtin, a combination of literary discourse and everyday practical speech. Besides its use of narrator's narration (analogous to stylization), *Zapiski* combines features of three out of the four meta-linguistic types studied by Bakhtin: stylization, *skaz*, and dialogue.

Notes

1. The book is a revised edition of Bakhtin's *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo* (1929).
2. See also Bakhtin's table (340-41). According to the principle of classification used in the table, the discourse of *Zapiski* falls under several categories including 2.e., that is, "any transmission of someone else's words with a shift in accent." This category belongs to the second type, namely, "vary-directional double-voiced discourse." It is noteworthy that parody belongs to the same type of discourse.
3. See, for example, Crystal:

The traditional concern of linguistic analysis has been the construction of sentences; but in recent years there has been an increasing interest in analysing the way sentences work in sequence to produce coherent stretches of languages. . . . Discourse analysis focusses on the structure of naturally occurring spoken language, as found in such "discourses" as conversations, interviews, commentaries, and speeches. . . . Pragmatics studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others. . . . The broadest [approach to pragmatics] sees pragmatics as the study of the principles and practice underlying *all* aspects of language usage, understanding, and appropriateness. (116-120; emphasis in the original)
4. Eikhenbaum also investigated *skaz*; he believed that *skaz* is an orientation (*установка*) toward the oral form of narration, an orientation toward colloquial speech and related language characteristics (colloquial intonation, syntactical construction of oral speech, colloquial vocabulary, etc.). As opposed to Bakhtin, Eikhenbaum does not take into account the fact that in most cases *skaz* is first and foremost oriented toward the speech of the other, and only as a consequence—toward colloquial speech. See Eikhenbaum 210-217 and Bakhtin 327.
5. See Bakhtin about Tolstoy on this issue (310). See also Bakhtin's table, in which the category of objectified discourse "with a predominance of individually characteristic determining factors" (as opposed to the category "with a predominance of socio-typical determining factors") seems to be more suitable for characterization of the discourse of the underground man (340).
6. See also Dostoevsky's footnote (1973; 99).
7. See below for an analysis of the semantics of the verbs.
8. All page numbers in this and subsequent tables refer to the 1926 edition of *Zapiski*.
9. The status of *мой* is not very clear. In grammar books, it is usually listed as a pronominal adjective. Russian grammar books tend to call it possessive pronoun, whereas English grammars of Russian call it either a possessive or pronominal adjective.
10. Cf. "Где у меня первоначальные причины?..." (*Zapiski* [1926] 119).

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