Discourse analysis has shown the many communicative options speakers have available at any one time in a given interaction. However, words are only part of our communicative strategy; often, as the proverb states, silence can be golden, saying more than a word could hope to encapsulate. Recent works by Mikhail Epstein, N.D. Arutiunova and Adam Jaworski have shown the importance of studying silence in culture and linguistics; few have applied these works to a study of discourse in literature. Such an approach proves especially useful in analyzing Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov, a novel punctuated by intense moments of silence.

One of the problems of using silence as an interpretive tool lies in understanding the communicative difference between molchanie and tishina. Aleksei Frishman has argued that molchanie provides “the continuation of dialogue on a different level” (119) while Malcolm Jones has recently written in favor of tishina, stating that only it has “access to the divine source of life” (146). By focusing on the motif of silence present in Alyosha Karamazov’s vision during “The Cana of Galilee” chapter, this paper will demonstrate that, from a communicative standpoint, tishina consistently proves to be a monologic silence, while only molchanie can provide true dialogue-in-silence, both human and Divine.

References


