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A Study In

**DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
TOM STOPPARD'S PLAYS
ARTIST DESCENDING A STAIRCASE
AND TRAVESTIES**

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A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of The M.A. Degree in Linguistics

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Abstract

This research is an attempt towards applying discourse analysis to the dramatic texts of Stoppard's plays Artist Descending a Staircase and Travesties. The main purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how dramatic analysis helps in interpreting the implied meanings which elude the literal meanings of the dramatic dialogue, consequently leading to fuller understanding and deeper appreciation of the play.

The technique of analysis suggested in this research focuses on the text as a communication within a set of linguistic conventions. Thus understanding the characters is based on their linguistic behaviour with each other. This study answers the following questions:

1. How far is the suggested technique of analysis successful in analysing dramatic dialogue?
2. How far is the analysis of dramatic texts beneficial in developing the relationships between the characters of the play?
3. Do the two plays share the same linguistic features?
4. How do characters' discourse vary according to: a) the discussed topics, b) the age and gender of the characters c) their social rank and d) their psychological status?
5. Is there a certain technique of analysis, which can be applied to all dramatic texts?

This research consists of an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The introduction outlines the aim of this thesis and provides information about Stoppard's age, life and career. In addition, it discusses the salient features of his style.

The first chapter is theoretical, aiming at introducing the technical terms that are used in the analytical chapters. It provides several definitions for the term 'style'. Moreover, it explains the terms; stylistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis and their relation to literature. This chapter offers a brief information about discourse analysis and the analysis of drama and also offers a variety of techniques that can be used fruitfully in the analysis of drama. It demonstrates the structure of the dramatic dialogue and the similarity between dramatic dialogue and real conversation. Some of major topics in discourse analysis which are covered:

- 1- the origin of different kinds of speech acts.
- 2- Schematic assumptions, presupposition and inference.
- 3- The Grice co-operative principle in conversation.
- 4- Politeness Strategies.
- 5- Address forms.
- 6- Turn-taking and drama.
- 7- Pun.

Chapter two is reserved to the analysis of Artist Descending a Staircase; the most accomplished of Stoppard's radio plays for the vitality of its dialogue. In this play Stoppard tackles many themes and focuses on the theme of art, which is elaborated in Travesties.

This chapter focuses on the importance of the interpretation of different types of speech acts and politeness strategies in understanding the play and appreciating it.

Chapter three is reserved for the analysis of Stoppard's play Travesties. Although the play tackles the theme of art as Artist Descending a Staircase, a different technique is adopted in analyzing the text. Travesties comprises several plays within the same play. The text is divided into sections according to the grouping of sets of participant characters on the stage. Each section is marked with a shift in both topic and style.

The conclusion of this research emphasizes that style is simply the writer's deliberate choice of certain words and structures, which vary according to the context of situation he deals with. Consequently the language is expected to vary from one situation to another. Then the analysis of the discourse of the two plays written by Stoppard Artist Descending a Staircase and Travesties, will lead to a fuller understanding and to greater appreciation of the two plays.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I- Aim of the research	1
II- The Age of Tom Stoppard	2
III- Stoppard's Life and Career	5
IV- Stoppard's Art and Technique	6
V- Literary Discourse Analysis	11
VI- Reasons for Choosing Stoppard's Discourse	15
VII- Specific Reasons for Choosing 'Artist Descending a Staircase' and 'Travesties'	16
VIII- The Structure of the Thesis	18

CHAPTER ONE : DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

1.1. Language	23
1.2. Register	24
1.3. Style and Stylistics	25
1.3.1. Style	25
1.3.2. Stylistics	28
1.4. Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis and Literature	29
1.4.1. Pragmatics	30
1.4.2. Discourse Analysis	32
1.4.2.1. Discourse Analysis and The Analysis of Drama	34
1.4.2.2. The Discourse Structure of Drama	37
1.4.2.3. Real Conversation and Dramatic Dialogue	38
1.5. Speech Acts	42
1.5.1. Kinds of Speech Acts	44
1.5.2. Indirect Speech Acts	46

1.6. Schematic Assumption, Presupposition, and Inference	48
1.7. The Co-operative Principle	50
1.7.1 Conversational Implicature	51
1.8. Politeness	52
1.9. Address Forms	57
1.10. Turn Taking and Drama	57
1.11. Punning	60

CHAPTER TWO : ARTIST DESCENDING A STAIRCASE

2.1. Introductory	72
2.2. Title Analysis	74
2.3. Structure and Cohesion	76
2.4. Inference and Schema Theory	77
2.5. Speech Acts	78
2.5.1. Expressives	79
2.5.2. Commissives	83
2.5.3. Directives	85
2.5.4. Assertives	86
2.6. Grice Principle	88
2.7. Politeness	95
2.8. Terms of Address	100
2.9. Proper Names	102
2.10 Turn Taking in 'Artist Descending a Staircase'	108
2.11. Punning in 'Artist Descending a Staircase'	110
2.12 Concluding Remarks	115

CHAPTER THREE : TRAVESTIES

3.1. Introductory	123
3.2. Title Analysis	125