

ABSTRACT

This master's thesis analyses the following plays by contemporary American playwright, David Mamet: *Oleanna* (1992) and *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983). The thesis deals with the discourse that was used and the question of the characters' power relations, which are examined from a sociolinguistic point of view. Firstly, the thesis defines power relations according to Michel Foucault and shows that communication can serve as an instrument of how to act upon others. The thesis is primarily based on the theory of Deborah Tannen, who observes the ambivalent nature of solidarity and power, and introduces her five areas of interest: indirectness, interruption, silence versus volubility, topic raising and verbal conflict. The thesis examines a selection of dialogues from the plays in order to elucidate how these aspects further influence the actions and behaviour of the characters, and explores the effects of the utterances including the effects of power. The thesis also deals with the question of failure of communication, which is examined from the perspective of Roman Jakobson's functions of language, Paul Grice's cooperative principle and Geoffrey N. Leech's politeness principle.

Key Words

Mamet, *Oleanna*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, discourse, power, power relations, failure of communication