Wittgenstein's Language-games, Stoppard's Building-blocks and context-based learning in a Corpus

An analysis of *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* as a paradigm for foreign language acquisition

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Tom Stoppard, in his plays Dogg's Hamlet *and* Cahoot's Macbeth*, presents a unique way of learning a new language; that is, by active interaction in the target language in real life situations. These real life situations are a school ceremony and a private performance of Shakespeare's plays. Though Stoppard's plays contain hugely comic and even hilarious episodes, yet the idea of language acquisition that forms the basis of these plays is important in its application to language learning in general. Stoppard draws upon the ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein who shows that language is a public activity and its learning depends upon an operative knowledge that comes thorough active interaction with its users. Wittgenstein defines language-learning as a kind of game-playing, in which the rules of the game are learnt as the players play it. These rules of usage (or playing) are acquired by actively participating in the working samples of language in actual use, a concept that is often referred to as corpus linguistics. In my paper I aim to take the paradigm of Stoppard's plays* Dogg's Hamlet *and* Cahoot's Macbeth *and to examine how it can be applied to the actual learning of a foreign language in the classroom.*

Key Words*: Language learning, games, humour, corpus linguistics, classroom teaching, innovation, meaning-usage-context.*

Learning a foreign language is a matter that has been discussed widely by linguists and educationists alike. In the past a foreign language was usually learnt by memorizing certain rules of grammar which were then repeatedly practiced for correct usage. However, the educationists of the modern day believe in a more interactive approach. According to the modern approach to language learning the rules governing a certain language are deduced from an authentic communication in that language, by using samples of that language in a natural setting. This method of language learning is often referred to as "corpus linguistics". Corpus linguistics is the study of language as it deals with the "real world text"; that is, it represents a deductive approach to deriving a set of abstract rules by which any language is governed. These rules are arrived at by its users through an active interaction in the target language, which is introduced in the form of samples taken from a specific corpus. Such an approach also shows the relationship of language to life in general since these samples of language are usually taken from the concrete, living world around us. Moreover, corpus linguistics provides a more objective view of language than that of introspection, intuition and anecdotes. John Sinclair (1998) points out that this is because speakers do not have access to the subliminal patterns which run through a language.

This objectivity allows corpus linguists to investigate almost any language patterns — lexical, structural, lexico-grammatical, discourse, phonological, morphological—often with very specific agendas such as discovering male versus female usage of tag questions or children's acquisition of irregular past participles. Through corpus-based analysis an investigator can discover not only the patterns of language use, but the extent to which they are used, and the contextual factors that influence such patterns. In order to apply the idea of corpus linguistics to language-learning it is necessary to first have a corpus plan, that is, the step by step induction of samples of language for learning purposes. A corpus can consist of a body of natural texts that are compiled from the written or the spoken language. The main focus of corpus linguistics is to discover patterns of authentic language use through analysis of actual usage.

One of the major advantages of using corpus linguistics for learning a foreign language is that it allows us to keep track of language register. Language register means the varieties of language which are used for different situations, like the formal, casual, or intimate ways of communication, depending upon the degree and kind of relationship between the speaker and the listener. Guy Aston (1997) claims that a single language can have many registers, which range from the general to the highly specific. A general register could include the language that is used for fiction, academic prose, newspapers, or casual conversation, whereas a specific register would be the sub-registers within any general register; for example, in the register of academic prose the sub-registers would be scientific texts, literary criticism, or linguistics studies, each having its own specific characteristics of language usage. Thus, when samples of language are taken from actual registers, like a newspaper or a television serial, the mode of expression specific to that register is practiced. Not only is it practiced but the learners also have the opportunity of paying special attention to the different contexts in which language is being used. Richard Schmidt, a proponent of consciousness-raising, argues that what language learners pay attention to conditions the outcome of learning (1990). According to Willis, learners may be able to determine the potentially different meanings and uses of common words, useful phrases and typical collocations they might use themselves, the structure and nature of both written and spoken discourse, and be aware that certain language features are more typical of some kinds of text than others (1998).

Corpus analysis reveals that language often behaves differently according to the register within which it is being used, a fact that cannot be easily understood through the more traditional methods of learning a language, such as rote learning, drilling or grammar-translation methods. This is something that Tom Stoppard takes up and demonstrates in the two plays that are being examined in this paper, namely *Dogg's Hamlet* and *Cahoot's Macbeth*. In *Dogg's Hamlet* the register is the academic environment of a school where a rehearsal and performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is taking place, while in *Cahoot's Macbeth* the register is the performance of *Macbeth* in a private living room theater. Interestingly, both these plays contain a sub-register as well since the action takes place not in English but in a mysterious tongue "Dogg" which is completely strange for the audience, and one of the characters. Stoppard explains in the preface to his plays that the "appeal to me consisted in the possibility of writing a play which had to teach the audience the language the play was written in" (1980: 8). Stoppard goes on to explain the factors that contributed to the writing of these two plays and their co-relation to each other:

"The comma that divides *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* also serves to unite the two plays which have common elements: the first is hardly a play at all without the second, which cannot be performed without the first" (1980: 7). Thus, from the very outset, Stoppard establishes the need for jigging together language pieces for effective understanding of a new language.

Stoppard's plays are written in an imaginary language, "Dogg", which is known by everyone on the stage, except for one character named Easy—and the audience, of course. The most significant feature of the new language is that it contains the same words as English but these words carry meanings that are entirely different from their English equivalents. The form and meaning of the words initially appear to be utterly divorced from each other, yet their link is gradually learnt and adopted by a direct interaction with its speakers. Stoppard explains in the preface to the play that the idea from which he has constructed his play is to be found in the work of the innovative linguist and philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. Since the preface contains vital information about the mentoring behind Stoppard's two plays I have quoted below a major chunk of the text, because a clear understanding of the concept behind the play is essential for an effective reading of how language acquisition takes place in Stoppard and, by extension, in any language learning activity.

> *Dogg's Hamlet* derives from a section of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations. Consider the following scene. A man is building a platform using pieces of wood of different shapes and sizes. These are thrown to him by a second man, one at a time, as they are called for. An observer notes that each time the first man shouts 'Plank!' he is thrown a long flat piece. Then he calls 'Slab!' and is thrown a piece of a different shape. This happens a few times. There is a call for 'Block!' and a third shape is thrown. Finally a call for 'Cube!' produces a fourth type of piece. An observer would probably conclude that the different words described different shapes and sizes of the material. But this is not the only explanation. Suppose, for example, the thrower knows in advance which pieces the builder needs, and in what order. In such a case there would be no need for the builder to name the pieces he requires but only to indicate when he is ready for the next one. So the calls might translate thus:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Plank = Ready | Block = Next |
> | Slab = Okay | Cube = Thank you |
>
> In such a case, the observer would have made a false assumption, but the fact that he on the one hand and the builders on the other are using two different languages need not be apparent to either party. (1980: 7-8)

In his book *Philosophical Investigations,* published posthumously in 1953, Wittgenstein opines that language acquires meaning by its very use. Wittgenstein says that language is a part of an activity or of a form of life (1958: point 23). He further goes on to say that meaning is use—that is, language is not defined by the reference it makes to the objects or things that it signifies but by the way it is used for effective communication. For example, there is no need to believe that there is something called "good" which exists independently of any particular "good deed" (1958: point 77). Wittgenstein observes that language is not to be analyzed back, through a hierarchy of forms, to some reality that it is supposed to convey: language is now itself the prime

reality. Because it has no external support, language is not reduced in analysis but is laid bare. Meaning, for Wittgenstein, is not something that exists beyond language: it is identified by its very use. *Philosophical Investigations* is full of reminders that language is a continual process of renewal and formation. There are, Wittgenstein says, countless different kinds of sentences, and "this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten" (1958: point 23). Pursuing this analogy between language-forms and the games we play he points to the case where we make up the rules as we learn them and "there is even one where we can alter them—as we go along" (1958: point 83). Wittgenstein's idea that language learning is like playing games, in which we learn the rules as we play, matches Stoppard's use of the new language "Dogg" in his plays. From the perspective of Stoppard's plays Wittgenstein's idea that language is a game-like activity acquires a new meaning: namely, that language cannot be learnt simply by a process of introspection but is acquired by active interaction among its users. Like games language too is a group activity, almost a form of life, and a means of expression capable of being learnt by anyone who takes part in this activity. Wittgenstein goes on to say: "And this is just what we say we do. That is to say: we sometimes describe what we do in these words. But there is nothing astonishing, nothing queer, about what happens" (1958: point 197).

The example of building blocks upon which Stoppard himself builds his play is also taken from Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein gives this example in the first few pages of the *Philosophical Investigations* (1958: points 7, 8, 19 20, etc). In trying to show that language is a public activity, Wittgenstein takes the example of a team of builders and explores the various theoretically possible meanings that their calls such as "block", "slab" or "pillar" might have. He demonstrates that it may not be the purpose of these words to evoke images and that senses other than simple descriptions of the building materials might thus be conveyed. It is this specific example of the team of builders which Stoppard develops in creating a situation where Easy, the lorry driver, discovers that all the other characters are using a language with different (and usually contrary) senses from his own, and it is the comic confusion engendered by their misfiring attempts at communication which provides the core of the play. The audience both enjoys the slapstick comedy of miscommunication and confusion as well as observes the gradual and playful manner in which the learning of this new language takes place. In presenting Dogg language to Easy, and to the audience, Stoppard erects as few linguistic barriers as possible, since the language's structure, syntax, rhythms and intonations are broadly the same as English. Only the sense of the words is altered, which provides a lively verbal and situational humor. The setting of the play is the prize distribution ceremony of a school in which the boys are to perform Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* Easy, the only non-Dogg speaking character in the play, brings a lorry full of the building material for constructing the platform for the ceremony. The other main characters are Dogg, the headmaster, and a small group of school boys, chiefly Abel, Baker and Charlie, who are preparing to perform Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* As the play opens, the audience's first response is complete disorientation, soon followed by a hunt for the 'correct' meanings of Dogg language vocabulary:

> *Empty Stage*
>
> *Baker: (Off-stage*) Brick!

(A football is thrown from off-stage left to off-stage right. Baker receiving ball) Cube.

(Able enters…with microphone and stand which he places down stage. The microphone has a switch.)

Abel: (into the microphone) Breakfast, breakfast…sun – dock – trog…

He realizes the microphone is dead. He tries the switch a couple of times and then speaks again into the microphone.) Sun – dock – trog – pan – slack…

(The microphone is still dead. Abel calls to someone off-stage.)

Haddock priest! (1980: 15)

This language initially gets the audience completely confused and the only way out for them is to try to make sense of what is going on before their eyes. Thus, the viewers have to translate these exchanges for themselves in order to keep up with the play. In a way, this proves to be a simple enough affair: "Brick" means "here", "cube" means "thank you", "breakfast" means "testing", "sun, dock, trog" is a sequence of numbers that stand for "one, two three" and "haddock priest" means "the mike is dead". The audience's task here and throughout the play is eased very considerably by the explanatory visual context which Stoppard provides to help them place the seemingly "wrong" words into their "right" context. It quickly emerges, for instance, that "git" means "sir"; "Cretinous pig-faced, git" sounds like an insult, but when it is addressed respectfully to the headmaster by young Abel, the headmaster looks at his watch and answers with the correct time. Again, sometimes harmless English words translate into insults or inappropriate slang in Dogg. Thus, when Easy tries to say "Afternoon, squire" to his supervisor it seems like a normal greeting; but, as Stoppard notes in the translation brackets, "Afternoon, squire" in Dogg means—"Get stuffed, you bastard".

The idea of the imaginary tongue "Dogg" is not just a clever application of Wittgenstein's theory nor is it merely a random word substitution; rather it is a unique example of Stoppard's early genius. Stoppard's creation of the new language, Dogg, at first seems like a random combination of words and meanings. However, upon a close scrutiny one comes to see that many of the words of Dogg language are very carefully chosen. The meanings of numbers or digits in Dogg, for example, contain some visible though remote semblance to their English equivalents. Since these digits are from everyday language they can serve as effective context clues too, as is shown by a parallel analysis of the numerals in Dogg and in English that is given below:

Quite (Dogg)	0 or Zero or nil (English)
Sun (Dogg)	1 or one (English)
Dock (Dogg)	2 or two (English)
Trog (Dogg)	3 or three (English)
Slack (Dogg)	4 or four (English)

Pan (Dogg)	5 or five (English)
Sock (Dogg)	6 or six (English)
Slight (Dogg)	7 or seven (English)
Bright (Dogg)	8 or eight (English)
None (Dogg)	9 or nine (English)
Tun (Dogg)	10 or ten (English)
What (Dogg)	11 or eleven (English)
Dunce (Dogg)	12 or twelve (English) (1980: 25)

At a broader plane this co-relation between the two languages can be applied to the field of literary studies in general; for example, the language of Shakespeare himself can at times become somewhat unintelligible for the modern students. It is possible that present day students of literature may have problems with Shakespearean texts because of the unfamiliar words and their seemingly far-fetched application. Shakespeare's vocabulary, in particular, can become a stumbling block for the modern students, especially for the readers of his plays who have only the written text in front of them. In performance the viewers can understand the play better, since the speaking actor frequently relies upon tone, semantic drive, narrative context and body language to communicate the sense of utterly unfamiliar terms, references and phrases; however, on the page such words can be impenetrable for the modern reader of English. It is at this point that context learning pays off which allows the learner to judge the meaning of words by understanding the general context or situation in which these words are used.

The context is equally self-defining when Charlie starts singing to the tune of 'My Way':

Engage congratulate moreover state abysmal fairground.

Begat perambulate this aerodrome chocolate éclair found.

Maureen again dedum-de-da ultimately cried egg.

Dinosaurs rely indoors if satisfied egg.(1980: 19)

Here the crucial context clue is musical and even the rhyme scheme plays an important role in decoding the language that is being used. At the time when *Dogg's Hamlet* was written, the song "My Way" sung by Frank Sinatra was very popular. It had become the signature song for Sinatra, even though Sinatra himself did not rate the song very highly. The lyrics of "My Way" picture a dying man, facing the final curtain, looking back in his life and deciding that he is satisfied with the way he lived it. Given below is the text of "My Way" in English along with its translation in Dogg.

MY WAY	(SATISFIED EGG)
And now, the end is here	(*En-gage con-grat-ulate*)
And so I face the final curtain	(*More-o-ver state a-bysmal fair-ground*)
My friend, I'll say it clear	(*Be- gat per-am-bu-late*)
I'll state my case, of which I'm certain	(*This aer-o-drome choc-'late e-clair found*)
I've lived a life that's full	(*Mau-reen again (pe-can) dedum—*)
I traveled each and ev'ry highway	(*Ma-rau-der fig de--da Ul-ti-mate-ly cried egg*)
And more, much more than this,	(*Di-no-saurs re-ly in-doors*)
I did it my way	(*If sat-is-fied egg*) (1980, p. 19)

As in all good language acquisition the audience learns the Dogg language slowly, as Stoppard teaches the audience the essentials of linguistic survival in a place where only Dogg is spoken. The audience becomes familiar with words for directions, as "Cauliflower" means "Left" (20), "Onyx" means 'Right'(20), and "Tissue" means 'Straight ahead' (20). They now know that "Upside" stands for "Have you seen it?" (17) and "Useless" represents "Good Day", or "Good Afternoon" (17). Dogg also appears to have gender pronouns as "Git" means "Sir", while "Get" means "Madam" (16, 29). The connotations are all juxtaposed so that "Pig-faced" represents "Please" (16), "Cutlery" is "Excuse me" (30), "Afternoon" stands for "Get Stuffed" (16), "Squire" is the name for "Bastard" (21) and "Vanilla" is "Rotten" (16). "Marmalade" denotes "Approval" (25), while "Gymshoes" stands for "Excellent" (28). It is only with paying attention to the context in which these language games are taking place that the audience is on its way to learning Dogg. Context learning is also visible when Charlie turns on his radio and the pace and intonations of the speaker's voice make it clear that he is listening to the day's football results, even if the team's names are themselves indecipherable:

> Cabrank dock, Blanket Clock quite; Tube Clock dock, Handbag dock; Haddock Clock quite, Haddock Foglamp trog; Wonder quite, Picknicking pan. (1980: 25)

In all these cases, the clarity and familiarity of the context is such that the meanings can mostly be understood. Context-based learning of a language, one of the major techniques in corpus linguistics, is seen literally taking place both on the stage and among the audience.

Sharing our confusion, however, is Easy; when Abel asks him for the time—"Cretinous pig-faced, git?" —he gets an undeserved box at the ears for his troubles; and when Easy offers an amiable "Afternoon squire" to the headmaster he soon gathers, to his cost, that in Dogg this means "Get stuffed, you bastard". As might be anticipated, though, the mutual confusion is at its

greatest when the boys form a chain to help him construct the speech-day platform by joining the building blocks:

> *Dogg: (Calling out to Abel loudly – shouts)* Plank! *(To Easy's surprise and relief a plank is thrown to Baker who catches it, passes it to Charlie, who passes it to Easy, who places it on the stage. Dogg smiles, looks encouragingly at Easy.)*
>
> *Easy: (Uncertainly, calls.)* Plank!
>
> *(To his surprise and relief a second plank is thrown in and passed to him the same way. He places it.)* Plank!
>
> *(A third plank is thrown in and positioned as before. Confidently, calls.)* Plank!
>
> *(A block is thrown instead of a plank.)* (1980: 21)

And so it continues, occasionally as Easy intends, usually as he does not, since "plank" in Dogg language means "ready"! At the same time, he (like the audience) gradually pieces together one or two of the more basic meanings of Dogg, and by the start of the boy's production of *Hamlet* he is able to demonstrate his growing grasp of the jargon by introducing it over the microphone: "Hamlet bedsocks Denmark. Yeti William Shakespeare" (1980: 38). Perhaps the most humorous and revealing section of the play is the address of the dignified lady who is the guest of honour for the afternoon and whose main speech provides the most comic example of Dogg language in action:

> Lady: (*Nicely*.) Scabs, slobs, yobs, yids, spicks, wops …
>
> (*As one might say Your Grace, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls …*)
>
> Sad fact, brats pule puke crap-pot stink, spit; grow up dunces crooks; rank socks dank snotrags, conkers, ticks: crib books, cock snooks, block bogs, jack off, catch pox pick spots, scabs, padlocks, seek kicks, kinks, slack; nick swag, swig coke, bank kickbacks;…frankly can't stand kids.
>
> (*Applause.* Lady *comes down …*)   (1980: 28)

Here, with great obviousness but with almost equal hilarity, Stoppard splashes the stiff-necked lady with the colours of the comic, combining slang and rough colloquy with crudely onomatopoeic syllables which point a meaning diametrically opposed to that which she intends.

Like Easy, the audience has now started deciphering the new language, and is beginning to learn the codes of Dogg. As Cahoot says later, in the second play, "You don't learn it, you catch it" (1980: 74) showing that learning is more of a process of "tuning in" to the correct structures than of acquiring by rote (Brassell 1985: 239). The process of learning Dogg is designed to make this very point. Here, Stoppard is using an entire language system to be deciphered like a code. For codes, jargons, clichés, etc, are like Wittgenstein's language-games which are learnt as one plays them. This idea is further shown in the truncated version of the performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which comes as an island of English in the sea of Dogg. Coming after a prolonged exposure to the Dogg language, Shakespeare sounds more like a breath of spring than ever before. The play within the play opens with the Prologue delivered by the headmaster of the school. The prologue is a sketchy resume of key lines from the play,

cleverly tailored to resemble the typical generalities of a headmaster's speech. The performed version itself is a remarkably ingenious compression, extracting only the most essential exchanges of Shakespeare's play to create ten unbelievably fast scenes. In these scenes all the extraneous descriptions, explanations or poetic embellishments are removed, and cut-outs of the sun and the moon flick up or down to suggest night or day. The fidelity to Shakespeare's text is mostly observed, and, in spite of the minor changes in the presentation of the characters, most of the speeches and interpolations follow their true sequence:

(Enter Ghost *above the wall built of blocks)*

Hamlet: Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Something is rotten in the state of Denmark! Alas, poor ghost.

Ghost: I am thy father's spirit.

            Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

Hamlet: Murder?

Ghost: The serpent that did sting thy father's life

            Now wears his crown.

Hamlet: O my prophetic soul! My Uncle?

(*Exit* Ghost. *To* Horatio*.)*

            There are more things in heaven and earth

            Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

(Exit Horatio*)* (1980: 33-34)

The compressed version of Shakespeare's most famous masterpiece is then repeated in the final two-minute "encore" in which almost the same number of characters rushes on and off stage, with their speeches desperately truncated. Though the text of the fifteen minute *Hamlet* remains substantially the same, its meaning changes with this new context and cast, and it now contributes to the larger whole that is *Dogg's Hamlet*. With Easy, the audience has entered a linguistically bewildering but tacitly familiar dramatic world, and now we see the inhabitants themselves trying to learn a Shakespearian language which we already understand. Their absurd condensation of *Hamlet* now suggests a woefully inadequate grasp of its tragic richness; but it is also, of course, 'a lightly satirical comment on our own reductive schooling' (Whitaker 1983: 155). Nevertheless, we have experienced here the fact that human beings can transcend all such differences between worlds through a playful education in language.

Dogg's Hamlet redefines the process of language acquisition and shows a performed explanation of Wittgenstein's ideas about language, meaning and usage. The play shows that language can never be private and that it exists solely by virtue of its public presence. Its learning is not a process of introspection alone. Language must be a group activity, a means of expression capable of being learnt by others, just as Easy, along with the audience, has gradually mastered the initially un-understandable Dogg language.

In the second play which comes as a sequel to the first one, Stoppard shows how the learnt language Dogg is put to actual practical use. Here the text taken for dramatic purpose is Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Stoppard shows that the language of a literary text has an authority of its own which is shared by its users. Where the first section, *Dogg's Hamlet,* is concerned with the learning of a new language based on the theoretical framework of Ludwig Wittenstein the second section shows how the learnt language can be practically used as a tool of power. Viewing Wittgenstein's ideas from the perspective of the Czech political scenario, Tom Stoppard shows how language, text, and authority can be juggled together to create a sparkling comedy. However, the actual social and political conditions of Czechoslovakia during the writing of the play were far from comic. We again turn to the author's own words which show the conditions in which *Cahoot's Macbeth* was written. In the preface to the 1980 edition Stoppard writes: "*Cahoot's Macbeth* is dedicated to the Czechoslovakian playwright Pavel Kahout. During the last decade of 'normalization' which followed the fall of Dubcek, thousands of Czechoslovaks had been prevented from pursuing their careers. Among them are many writers and actors" (1980: 8). He further explains the banned actor's decision to perform in spite of all oppression:

> A year later Kahout wrote to me: As you know, many Czeck theatre-people are not allowed to work in the theatre during the last years. As one of them who cannot live without theatre I was searching for a possibility to do theatre in spite of circumstances. Now I am glad to tell you that in a few days, after eight weeks rehearsals—a Living Room Theatre is opening, with nothing smaller but Macbeth'. (1980: 8)

Thus Stoppard in *Cahoot's Macbeth* portrays how force is employed by the political authorities to subjugate these left-wing actors and to stop them from acting, but these actors in turn use their own command over language to defeat the oppressors and to effectively carry out their artistic agenda. The dictatorial forces are here encapsulated in the figure of the Inspector who, as his anonymous common noun suggests, stands for the nameless "law" enforcing agencies which have every right to barge into an artistic production and to try to put an end to the proceedings. At a more dramatic level, the intrusion of the Inspector suggests a Pirendellian realism which allows Stoppard and the audience to poke more fun at the authority figure, especially when the actors switch to Dogg language as a code of communication from which the police force is essentially barred.

As in the first part of Stoppard's twin plays, in the second section too we have a truncated version of a Shakespearean tragedy, but far from the venue of a school function, here the setting is of a private flat in Prague, where a group of persecuted and banned actors perform Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the homes of friends and sympathizers. As Stoppard explains in his preface to the play, the origin of *Cahoot's Macbeth* lies in a real life version of *Macbeth*, performed by a "Living Room Theatre" group during the summer of 1978 by the persecuted playwright Pavel Kahout and Pavel Landovsky, and some other actors who had also fallen foul of the authorities. Stoppard retains the name of Kahout in his play to authenticate the factual basis of the idea, while at the same time fictionalizing the other details. Chief among these is the figure of the Inspector who interrupts the performance on two occasions, firstly to deliver a stern warning of possible repercussions, and secondly to physically attempt to put an end to the performance. He further attempts to use his authority to tamper with the text of the play by trying to end it with the crowning of Macbeth and lauding it with his own ominous banalities: "Very good. Very good! And so nice to have a play with a happy ending for a change" (1980: 58). This

draws a grim analogy between Macbeth's usurpation and the "normalization" of Czechoslovakia. The Inspector is a further demonstration of Stoppard's claim that politically repressive systems are linguistically repressive too, and so the Inspector thinks that he can do whatever he wants with language:

> I've got the penal code tattooed on my whistle, Landovsky, and there's a lot about you in it. Section 98, subversion—anyone acting out of hostility to the state… Section 100, incitement, anyone acting out of hostility to the state… I could nick you just for acting— and the sentence is double for an organized group, which I can make stick on Robinson Crusoe and his man any day of the week. (1980: 61)

Already he has shown how language can be molded to serve one's purpose: "Words", he announces, happily, "can be your friend or your enemy, depending on who's throwing the book, so watch your language" (1980: 59). However, in spite of the political nature of the Inspector's figure and its oppressive undertones, Stoppard invests his figure with essentially comic elements, striving to highlight the paradoxes of the repressive system in the most humorous light possible. Particularly interesting are the interrogations of Landovsky by the Inspector:

Inspector:	Who are you, pigface?
'Macbeth':	Landovsky.
Inspector:	The actor?
'Macbeth':	The floor cleaner in a boiler factory.
Inspector:	That's him. I'm a great admirer of yours, you know. I've followed your career for years.
'Macbeth':	I haven't worked for years.
Inspector:	What are you talking about?—I saw you last season—my wife was with me…
'Macbeth':	It couldn't have been me.
Inspector:	It was you—you looked great—sounded great—where were you last year?
'Macbeth':	I was selling papers in—
Inspector:	(*Triumphantly*) –in the newspaper kiosk at the tram terminus, and you were wonderful! I said to my wife, That's Landovsky—the actor, isn't he great?' (1980: 54)

Moments later, another echo of the authoritative tone is caught as the Inspector starts to quiz "Lady Macbeth" with the same kind of circular pseudo-logic:

Inspector:	Could I have your autograph, it's not for me, it's for my daughter—
'Lady Macbeth':	I'd rather not—the last time I signed something I didn't work for two years.

Inspector:	Now look, don't blame us if the parts just stopped coming. Maybe you got over-exposed.
'Lady Macbeth':	I was working in a restaurant at the time.
Inspector:	There you are, you see. The public's very funny about that sort of thing. They don't want to get dressed up and arrange a baby-sitter only to find that they've paid good money to see Hedda Gabler done by a waitress. (1980: 55)

Ironically, the jibes of the Inspector at the actors only point more poignantly at the plight of art and artists in a dictatorial state, where the actors are restrained from working with freedom. Even a great play like Shakespeare's *Macbeth* has to be performed in the limited capacity of the private apartments, and, if necessary, be camouflaged in the passwords of Dogg. Thus, where the reduction of *Hamlet* in the first section of the play is pure Stoppardian fun, the reduction of *Macbeth* is a brutal necessity—the only conceivable means of presenting the play in any form under the pressure of the Czechoslovakian police state of the time. Yet, in spite of the shadow of the political authority, the language of Stoppard's *Macbeth* remains essentially true to Shakespeare's text. The drama retains most of the original dialogues and scenes, the only difference being the interruptions of the Inspector. These interventions are, however, beautifully interwoven into the text of the play with an ironic appropriateness. The first intervention comes immediately after the murder of Duncan, with a prophetic undertone:

Macbeth: I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

Lady Macbeth: I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.

(*A police siren is heard approaching the house. During the following dialogue the car arrives and the car doors are heard to slam.*)

Macbeth: There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!'

One cried 'God Bless us!' and 'Amen' the other,

(*Siren stops*)

As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.(1980: 52)

At this very moment, ironically, the Inspector raps at the door to coincide, with exquisite timing, with the knocking that wakens the Porter and leads to the discovery of the murder. It also shows how the figure of the Inspector acts as a kind of an outside force which puts a break upon the artistic proceedings:

Hostess: I'm afraid the performance is not open to the public.

Inspector: I should hope not indeed. That would be acting without authority—acting without authority!—you'd never believe I make it up as I go along. (1980: 56)

This relates the Inspector to Macbeth himself, as he becomes the oppressor in *Cahoot's Macbeth*, as when he declares: "If I walk out of this show, I take it with me" (56). Thus, Stoppard

demonstrates the ironic parallels between the tyrant Macbeth and Czechoslovakia under the tyrannical secret police. When the Inspector returns for the second time, his approaching siren creates a still more devastating effect:

Macduff: Bleed, bleed, poor country!

              (*Police siren is heard in distance*)

Malcolm: It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash

              Is added to her wounds.

Macduff: O Scotland, Scotland!

              O nation miserable,

              With an untitled tyrant, bloody sceptred,

              When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again?

              See who comes here.

              (*Siren stops*)

Malcolm: My countryman; but yet I know him not.

              (*Inspector enters*) (1980: 72)

This "countryman", then, attempts to bring the curtain down by force, since the actors had ignored his earlier warning and had resumed their performance. Incidently, the flat is bugged, so the police are fully aware of what is being said or done in their absence, which further gives the idea of how things are constantly held under surveillance and check.

At this time Easy comes in with his lorry full of the building material. He again tells of his bizarre accident on the A412, but this time in Dogg: "Blankets up middling if season stuck, after plug-holes kettle-drummed lightly A412 mildly Rickmansworth—" (1980: 71). Indeed, he now seems as fluent in Dogg as he was in English in the first section. Here we see a parallel between the two languages: English is to Dogg in *Dogg's Hamlet* as Dogg is to Czech (which is presented as English by Stoppard) in this play. The linguistic relationship among the dissidents is thus quickly formed, and we see the Inspector literally groping for words:

Inspector: Who are you, pig-face?

Easy: Poxy queen! [Twenty past]

Inspector: What

Hostess: He doesn't understand you.

Inspector: What's that language he's talking?

Hostess: He's got a two-ton artichoke out there.

Inspector: What??? (1980:73)

At this point, the political authority of the Inspector is openly jeopardized by the linguistic innovation of the defiant actors, particularly when they have the weight of Shakespeare on their side. Inspector and Shakespeare stand at opposite ends of the scale, with the index triumphantly

inclining towards the latter, a visible proof of which comes when our actors quickly switch to Dogg in order to press ahead with their performance. When the Inspector asks where Easy learnt Dogg, Cahoot replies: "You don't learn it, you catch it" (1980: 74), a point which the Inspector is unable to understand as he remarks: "She's making it up as she goes along", as "Lady Macbeth" starts to translate Shakespeare into Dogg. Language, thus, becomes the means of repelling the authority of the Inspector, as his threat that anything they say will be taken down and played back at the trial meets with the response, "Bicycles! Plank!" (1980: 75). The Inspector is at a complete loss as language is wrested from his control, and now it is the he who appears to be gibbering nonsense: "Wilco Zebra over," he shouts in his walkie-talkie, "Green Charlie Angels 15 out" (1980: 76). His earlier claims to monitor the language of the actors are thrown back at his face, as he watches the performance of Dogg-*Macbeth* in helplessness.

Inspector: May I remind you we're supposed to be in a period of normalization here.

Hostess: Kindly leave the stage. Act Five is about to begin.

Inspector: Is it! I must warn you that anything you say will be taken down and played back at your trial.

Hostess: Bicycles! Plank....

Inspector: (*in the phone*) Did you get all that? Clear as what? I want every word in evidence.

Lady Macbeth: Hat, daisy puck! Hat, so fie….

Inspector: (*into the phone: pause*) How the hell do I know? But if it's not free expression, I don't know what is.   (1980: 75)

Without knowing it the Inspector has admitted that language is the only form of dissent over which the oppressive political state can have no control. By teaching his audience Dogg-language Stoppard has implicated them in "an act of collective and effective dissent, completing the train of development which successively diminishes the isolation of his characters" (Sammells 1988: 121). The power of the Shakespearian text, combined with the innovativeness of the actors, wrenches the self-ordained authority from the Inspector and leaves him dethroned of his dictatorial crown. The crown is, interestingly, duly placed on Malcolm's head, further literalizing the metaphor of shifting authorities. The final analysis thus upholds not only the universal authority of the Shakespearian masterpiece, but also maintains the freedom of language itself from all attempts to curtail it. It is this freedom of language that turns the tables over the dictatorial state in the final round, knocking out all the political Macbeths of "normalized" Czechoslovakia. Interestingly the theme of usurpation of the rightful authority in *Macbeth* itself serves as an indirect paradigm for the way in which the Inspector tries to encroach upon the individual rights of these actors. Yet, just as Macbeth could not carry on his autocratic rule in Shakespeare's play and was ultimately undone by his own misreading of the witch's equivocal language, similarly, the Inspector too is left powerless when faced with the task of interpreting an entirely unfamiliar tongue. Language is the most powerful tool of establishing one's authority, even more powerful than political and strategic oppression. The power of language is finally established as the learnt language, Dogg, now becomes a successful ploy at the hands of the actors to assert their own linguistic individuality.

Cahoot's Macbeth shows the practical application of the language that was learnt in *Dogg's Hamlet*. Together the two plays bring out the uniqueness of context-learning based on a real life setting. Viewed at from a pedagogical perspective, Stoppard's plays serve as a literal instance of putting the ideas of corpus linguistics to the use of language acquisition and application. In other words, the first play, *Dogg's Hamlet*, serves as the theoretical basis for driving home a unique way of acquiring a foreign language, while the second play, *Cahoot's Macbeth*, becomes a practical example of how the theoretical premises can be applied to an actual setting. Therefore, when the actors in *Cahoot's Macbeth* switch from Dogg to English and vice versa we actually see the success with which the characters and the audience had learnt the Dogg language in *Dogg's Hamlet*. Thus, Stoppard not only provides a theoretical basis for putting corpus linguistics to classroom education, but also displays a natural setting in which such a theoretical foundation is actually implemented.

One of the aims of this article has been to examine the scope of individual experimentation in the classroom teaching of a foreign language. I have tried to use the paradigm of Stoppard's plays to explore the use of specific language samples of a particular register in the classroom. As Stoppard has used the idea of a school rehearsal and a private living-room theater and has taken up samples both from the Shakespearean text and from the foreign language, Dogg, so a language teacher can create a specific context and introduce a language sample for active interaction among the students. However, there are several challenges that are involved in implementing this kind of use of corpus linguistics for the purpose of language teaching. The foremost challenge is that of corpus selection. It might need the genius of Stoppard to invent a methodology and register for a specific corpus selection, and so the teacher has to be significantly imaginative and innovative for this purpose. However, such a corpus selection can mostly be done within the academic institution itself. Often the major libraries of any educational institution contain large corpora, out of which some samples can be readily available to the teacher. Online services are another major source of searching for language samples. But the teacher needs to make sure that the corpus is useful for the particular teaching context and is representative of both the target language and the target register. Although most teachers acknowledge the utility of corpus linguistics in introducing innovative teaching techniques, at present one sees corpora's greatest potential as a source for materials development. Susan Conrad (2000) suggests that materials writers take register specific corpus studies into account, while Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998) emphasize the need for these writers to acknowledge the frequency which corpus studies reveal of words and structures in their materials design. Another option is that the teacher can construct the corpus, especially when the target register is highly specific. This can be done by using a textbook, course reader, or a bunch of articles which the students have to read or are representative of what they have to read. Furthermore, a corpus needs not to be large in order to be effective: in fact a limited yet highly focused corpus can be more useful. The primary considerations are that the corpus should be relevant to the students' needs, it should be selected with the learning objectives of the class in mind, and should match the ability and capacity of the students.

Related to the issue of corpus selection is that of corpus bias, a thing which can cause frustration for both the teacher and the students. Corpus bias means that the data presented by the selected samples can be misleading; if one uses a very large general corpus, it may obscure the register variation which reveals important contextual information about language use. The pitfall is that a corpus may tell us more about itself than about language use (Krieger 2003). Thus, if in

Dogg's Hamlet, the foreign language, Dogg, is allowed to encroach upon all the proceedings of the play it would have resulted in total confusion among the learners, and would have led to their losing interest in the entire thing. However, as any language teacher might notice, Stoppard has very ingenuously balanced the target register and language in Dogg with the use of Shakespeare's text, yet keeping both within grasp by his own explanatory directions in everyday English. In spite of the early confusion, the viewers/readers start putting together the pieces of the linguistic jigsaw, and then gradually begin to even enjoy the play. Moreover, Stoppard uses the element of comedy to lighten up the language learning activity as both verbal and situational comedy keeps the viewers/readers glued to the text, not to mention the parallel movement of performances in both Shakespearean language and in Dogg. It can be a good cue to the language teacher not only to not outdo the corpus selection and implementation but also to make it interesting by introducing comic undertones. Though it would be asking too much from a language teacher to actually plan the classroom activity with the innovation of a playwright, yet some clues to this effect can certainly be drawn from Stoppard's genius.

Another obstacle that can confront a language teacher in using corpus linguistics is the comprehensibility issue. An extended and complicated use of the corpus can be quite difficult for the students, and even for the teacher, to understand and might lead to overlooking the major information that the data provides. This problem can be overcome by allowing the students to use their own innovation to decipher the language that the samples present. The important thing here is that each student has an individual style of learning, which may be different from that of another. Thus, direct interaction among the students themselves can serve as a good problem-solving approach, as some students can "catch" the language more quickly, allowing others to learn from them just as Easy learnt the initially unintelligible Dogg from the other boys. All of these points reinforce the fact that careful consideration is required before the approach of corpus linguistics can be introduced in the language classroom. Yet if intelligently applied corpus linguistics can also serve as an extremely effective language teaching technique, since it not so much teaches language as it offers the opportunity to use it and to learn it while using it.

My present article is an attempt to draw upon the analogy of Stoppard's plays for using corpus linguistics as a language acquisition device in the classroom. Yet it is easier said than done, since the use of samples of context based language requires specific knowledge and considerable imagination on the part of the teacher. However the teacher can draw inspiration from the way in which Stoppard has used samples from both Shakespearean text and the unique Dogg language to bring about a successful acquisition and application of a new language.

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