

Analyzing Gender Representation and Role Reversal in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in light of Speech Act Theory

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Abstract

This paper investigates the functional use of language to highlight gender specific traits and power asymmetry patterns in Ibsen's A Doll's House. It applies functional approach to the text, which is based on Speech Act Theory. It studies and unfolds recurring patterns of dominance of Helmer and Nora by tracing acts, moves, exchanges and transactions in the conversation. The results obtained from the analysis are enlightening as there is a role reversal in the play and the acts, moves and exchanges which are peculiar to Helmer (in Event 1) are taken over or adopted by Nora towards the end of the play as she liberates herself from moral subjugation and social oppression (Event 2). This study shows that while Nora's sex remains the same, her gender changes towards the end of the play, when she slams the door. The present study is a contribution in the field of Language and Gender which began with the frameworks of deficient to dominance and difference. But the study tends to move away from an Essentialist (deficient) framework to Constructionist one, that is, gender is not a fixed entity, but a fluid social construct residing in interaction. The study shows that gender is a process which is neither complete nor consummate and we are not automata destined to perform the sex roles assigned at birth. Rather, we can defy the unjust social order by constructing and defining our own gender. Thus, the study has a liberating tendency as it helps to identify hierarchical relationships.

Keywords: *gender representation, feminist linguistic analysis, structural functional approach.*

1. Introduction

The traditional critics are least concerned with gender specific issues and even if we come across any reference of gender in traditional criticism, it is supposed to refer to universal human nature that goes beyond the scope of any specific gender, but inwardly it highlights the supremacy of masculine nature by giving us the male interpretation of literature (Cuddon, 1982). However, in modern times, there is more awareness of gender issues especially with regards to women's rights, due to the successful lobbying of Feminist movements. The main purpose of feminist criticism is to bring to surface the underlying "masculine bias by highlighting stereotypes or distorted portrayals of women in a literary tradition" (Klarer, 1999, p.97). The present study is an attempt to analyze the use of language for elaborating gender differences and it is conducted with the belief that language can help construct gender. Thus, the present research is in line with the efforts of other linguists such as Deirde Burton and Ronald Carter (1982) etc, to integrate language and literature. Moreover, it aims at providing an analytical way of approaching a text by analyzing the conversation between Helmer and Nora in *A Doll's House* to explore the way genders are portrayed through the use of language. The analysis conducted in the study is based on Speech Act theory.

2. What is Gender?

The word "gender" in the present study means social gender, not biological gender or grammatical gender. Biological gender refers to sex, whereas, grammatical gender points to difference between masculine and feminine. Social gender does not depict or reflect how male and female are, but it deals with the way how a given culture sees them or "how they are culturally constructed" (Bertens, 2003). It

can be differentiated from sex, which is a biological determinant (Kendall & Tannen, 2003). According to Wodak (1997), gender is “an aggregation of attributes concerned with investigating and displaying the peculiarities of women and interpreting them as gender-specific or gender-typical attributes” (p. 13). Since gender is regarded as not a neutral phenomenon but as a socially constructed inequality, its study carries political motivations and implications. Consequently, feminists have keenly studied and quoted the differences among sexes as an evidence of inferior and subordinate position of women, who are forced to confine their activities to domains which are considered trivial by men (Murray, 1999).

3. Significance of the Study

This research is significant because its focus is on the neglected aspect of language use, that is, the study of text in the light of functional aspect of language as compared to formal study of language (Roulet, 1975). This study is useful for both students and teachers because it shows them the way to apply the Speech Act theory and to analyze literary texts, especially drama. It fills the vacuum between literature and language by applying the theory of language to a literary piece. Thus, it is a step towards integrating language and literature studies. This research will offer an objective analysis of the text under discussion and thus, may be used to measure the validity and reliability of the critical appreciation made about the text by other researchers through thematic studies. Further, this research offers a new way of teaching language and interpreting literary works to enhance the understanding of a text.

4. Research Questions

The study revolves around a key question: How does language reflect gender, i.e. the masculine versus the feminine and how are gender-specific traits shifted across the sexes when the role reversal takes place in *A Doll's House*? In addition, the research addresses the following related questions:

1. Whether the abrupt transformation in Nora's behavior can be studied and justified in the light of Speech Act theory?
2. Whether the application of Speech Act theory bridge the gap between literature and language and open new ways of exploring *A Doll's House*?

5. Literature Review

The research conducted on *A Doll's House* falls into two distinct traditions - traditional and modern criticism. The disputed element between these two groups is the final act of Nora's slamming the door and leaving for good. Now this change and awareness in Nora's character from the beginning to the end can be studied from different perspectives and there is an attempt either to justify her action or to blame her action at the end. The modern critics have justified Nora's act of leaving the home on the ground that she throws away the shackles of patriarchy and gets liberated. Whereas, traditional critics have criticized her for acting against her noble and maternal role and purported that she is morally corrupt. In traditional criticism, the critics like Mcfarlane (1994), who are having a conservative approach towards life, have criticized Nora for acting against her noble and maternal role and blamed her for being morally corrupt.

The modern critics like Northam (1965) have tried to justify Nora's act of leaving her home on the ground that she throws away the shackles of patriarchy and gets liberated. Northam has pointed out that “He (Ibsen) has written a modern play about modern women in a modern situation...” (p.108). Templeton (1989) strongly disagrees with the view that feminism is not an apt subject for a work of art and asserts that *A Doll's House* is a feminist play. Moreover, he differs with the viewpoint that Nora does not qualify as a spokesperson for propagating feminism due to her moral depravity. He opines that this judgment is due to the fact that we are judging woman's conduct from a male perspective. Rekdal

(2002) points out the fact that initially the play was esteemed as a feminist play in academia. But with the dawn of new criticism, there is a change of approach towards the play. The new critics believed that the play is not about feminism, but it deals with “the genesis of a human being” (p. 149).

The above-mentioned approaches to the text are thematic studies, that is why the events can be molded and new or divergent meanings can be dug out from the text and sometimes far fetched meaning are assigned to the text according to the ulterior motives of the critic. These thematic studies have become the butt of criticism for being subjective and impressionistic as discussed in chapter one. That is why there is a need to have an objective analysis of the text.

6. System of Analysis

The role of conversation cannot be ignored in our daily life. It serves as a tool to develop harmony and cooperativeness or to show displeasure and discomfort among the participants. It is interesting to note that conversation is not something which moves in a plain way, but it has got many layers which makes it quite complex. Apart from the fact that conversation is discursive and intricate, it is generally entitled as a rule-observing event (Searle, 1969). The pattern governing quality of a conversation entices us to conduct a linguistic analysis of the conversation.

Since conversation is highly patterned or structured, we need to study thoroughly not only each layer or hierarchy of conversation, but also the role and function it is performing. Discourse Analysts have pointed out more or less five levels of a conversation as discussed earlier, but the present study will stick to three basic levels of discourse to analyze a drama. In a conversation, we have exchanges, which can be further divided into smaller units called moves. Moves can be still divided into smaller units called acts. For example, look at the questioning exchange between a teacher and a student:

Transaction A: Introduction of Pakistan

Dialogue	Acts	Moves	Exchange
Teacher: Now.....I am going to ask you question related to Pakistan	Marker Starter	Opening move	Questioning
Pupil: sure	Acknowledge	Supporting move	

7. Acts

Act occupies the first position in the hierarchy of conversation. The function of an act is to express the intention of the speaker in a piece of conversation and “it corresponds most nearly to the grammatical unit clause” (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, p. 27). Acts are devised by keeping in mind the research area. For example, Sinclair and Coulthard have identified twenty two speech acts while analyzing the conversation between teacher and pupil. Burton has mentioned twenty-one speech acts while discussing the extract from Pinter’s *The Dumb Waiter*. The present study has pointed out twenty-six speech acts while discussing Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. Below are the acts which are used in the coding with their function, symbol and examples:

1. <Marker> Its function is to show boundaries in conversation and to suggest that the speaker wants to introduce a new topic. Its symbol is “M” and it is realized by the words like ‘Ok’, ‘Now’, ‘Good’, ‘Right’, ‘Well’.

HELMER: Oh **Well**, my skylark does that anyhow!

NORA: I’ll be a fairy and dance on a moonbeam for you, Torvald.

2. <Elicit> Its function is to get a linguistic response. Its symbol is “El” and it is realized by a question.
 HELMER: **Was that the dressmaker?**
 NORA: No, it was Kristina – she’s helping me to mend my costume. You know, I’m going to look so nice...
3. <Reply> Its function is to provide a linguistic response in the light of Elicit. Its symbol is “Rep” and it is realized by statements, questions or non verbal responses such as nodding.
 HELMER: Was that the dressmaker?
 NORA: **No, it was Kristina – she’s helping me to mend my costume. You know, I’m going to look so nice...**
4. <Comment> Its function is to expand or justify or to provide additional information. Its symbol is “Com” and it is realized by statement and tag question.
 HELMER: **[He looks at Nora for a moment, then goes to her.] Ah, it’s wonderful to be back home again, all alone with you.... How fascinating you are, you lovely little thing.**
 NORA: Don’t look at me like that, Torvald.
5. <Direct> Its function is to give an instruction or to order someone especially lower in rank. Its symbol is “D” and it is realized by imperatives or command.
 HELMER: **Give it to me. [He takes the letter and shuts the door.] Yes, it’s from him. You’re not to have it – I shall read it myself.**
 NORA: Yes, read it.
6. <React> Its function is to provide a response in the light of preceding Directs or to express strong feelings. Its symbol is “Rea” and it is realized by a reaction.
 HELMER: Both yours and the children’s, Nora darling.
 NORA: **Ah, Torvald, you’re not the man to teach me to be a real wife to you -**
7. <Inform> Its function is to provide information. Its symbol is “I” and it is realized by statements such as, the point is, as a matter of fact, actually, etc.
 HELMER: You’re ill, Nora – you’re feverish. I almost believe you’re out of your senses.
 NORA: **I’ve never seen things so clearly and certainly as I do tonight.**
8. <Acknowledge> Its function is to show that the initiation has been understood and regarded as a valid contribution to the conversation. Its symbol is “Ack” and it is realized by the words such as ‘yes’, ‘ok’, ‘all right’, ‘oh dear’, etc.
 HELMER: There you are – there you are! You see how right I was not to let you stay any longer.
 NORA: **You’re always right, Torvald, whatever you do.**
9. <Accept> Its function is to show that the reply or react is appropriate. Its symbol is “Acc” and it is realized by ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘good’, ‘fine’.
 HELMER: **There! [He hands her some notes.]** Good heavens, I know what a lot has to go on housekeeping at Christmas time.
 NORA [counting]: Ten-twenty- thirty- forty! Oh, thank you, Torvald, thank you! This’ll keep me going for a long time!
10. <Evaluate> Its function is to comment on the worthiness of the preceding contribution. Its symbol is “Ev” and it is realized by statements and tag question like ‘that’s right’, ‘what’s the matter with you’, ‘what about that’.
 HELMER: There you are – there you are! You see how right I was not to let you stay any longer.
 NORA: You’re always right, Torvald, whatever you do.

HELMER: [kissing her on the forehead]: **Now my little skylark's talking like a reasonable being....**

11. <Accuse> Its function is to request an apology or an excuse. Its symbol is "I" and it is realized by a statement, question or a command.

HELMER: **You wretched woman – what have you done?**

NORA: Let me go. You shan't take the blame – I won't let you suffer for me.

12. <Excuse> Its function is to provide an appropriate response to the preceding Accuse. Its symbol is "Exe" and it is realized by an apology.

HELMER: Now, you're just being extremely obstinate. Because you're irresponsible enough to go and promise to put in a word for him, you expect me to

NORA: **No, it isn't that, Torvald – it's for your own sake. The man writes for the most scurrilous newspapers – you told me so yourself – there's no knowing what harm he could do you. I'm simply frightened to death of him...**

13. <Prompt>: Its function is to reinforce a Direct as well as to demand some performance. Its symbol is "P" and it is realized by "go on", "hurry up", "quickly".

HELMER: **Come along – out with it.**

NORA: [in a rush]: You could give me money, Torvald. Only what you think you could spare – and then one of these days I'll buy something with it.

14. <Check>: Its function is to ask for clarification about the preceding issue. Its symbol is "Ch" it is realized by the words such as, 'I am sorry', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'I beg your pardon', etc.

HELMER: Oh my dear, as a lawyer I've seen it so often; nearly all young men who go to the bad have had lying mothers.

NORA: **Why only mothers?**

15. <Opine>: Its function is to express one's personal opinion, feelings and attitudes. Its symbol is "O" it is realized by the words such as, 'I feel', 'I think', 'it seems', etc.

HELMER: **Oh, but you should have.**

NORA: Yes, I know I should have, but I can't do anything unless you help me, Torvald. I've forgotten absolutely everything.

16. <Disagree>: Its function is to express disagreement with the ongoing opinion. Its symbol is "Dis".

HELMER: You're talking like a child; you don't understand the world you live in.

NORA: **No, I don't.** But now I mean to go into that, too. I must find out which is right- the world or I.

17. <Agree>: Its function is to express agreement with the ongoing topic between A and B. In other words, it indicates that B approves of what A means. Its symbol is "Ag" and it is realized by the words such as, 'fine', 'good', 'that's right', 'absolutely' etc.

HELMER [following her]: I see you still have the tarantella in your blood – it makes you more enchanting than ever. Listen – the party's beginning to break up. [softly] Nora – soon the whole house'll be quiet...

NORA: **Yes, I hope so.**

18. <Request>: Its function is to ask somebody to perform something. Its symbol is "Req" and it is realized by words such as 'beg', 'implore' etc.

HELMER: **Nora! Not now, Nora – wait till morning.**

NORA: [putting on her coat]: I couldn't spend the night in a strange man's house.

19. <Summons>: Its function is to suggest a boundary in a discourse and to call the hearer's attention. Its symbol is "Sum" and it is realized by calling the name of another participant.

HELMER: **Nora!**

NORA:[with a loud cry]: Ah...!

25. <Desire>: Its function is to express a strong wish to have or to do something. Its symbol is “Des” and it is realized by the use of words such as wish, want, etc.
 HELMER: Yes?
 NORA: **I’m terribly looking forward to the day after tomorrow- the fancy dress party at the stenborgs.**
21. <Realize>: Its function is to show awareness or knowledge about one’s position or status. Its symbol is “Real” and it is realized by the use of words such as understand, conscious, know, grasp etc.
 HELMER: Before everything else, you’re a wife and a mother.
 NORA: **I don’t believe that any longer. I believe that before everything else I’m a human being – just as much as you are... or at any rate I shall try to become one. I know quite well that most people would agree with you, Torvald, and that you have warrant for it in books; but I can’t be satisfied any longer with what most people say, and with what’s in books. I must think things out for myself and try to understand them.**
22. <Surprise>: Its function is to respond in such a way to show an element of surprise or shock. Its symbol is “Sur” and it is realized by the use of words such as ‘oh dear!’, ‘my goodness’ etc.
 HELMER: **What? By your father and me? The two people who loved you more than anyone else in the world.**
 NORA: [shaking her head]: You’ve never loved me, you’ve only found it pleasant to be in love with me.
23. <Resolve>: Its function is to show some sort of determination to perform or to make up one’s mind to do something. Its symbol is “Res” and it is realized by the use of words such as ‘determine’, ‘undertake’ etc.
 HELMER: [leaping to his feet]: what’s that you say?
 NORA: **I must stand on my own feet if I’m to get to know myself and the world outside. That’s why I can’t stay here with you any longer.**
24. <Suppose>: Its function is to assume or imagine something to be true for the purpose of explanation. Its symbol is “Sup” and it is realized by the use of words such as ‘consider’, ‘believe’, ‘anticipate’ etc.
 HELMER: **But suppose something of the sort were to happen...**
 NORA: If anything as horrid as that were to happen, I don’t expect I should care whether I owed money or not.
25. <Distract>: Its function is to draw a person’s attention away from something or to move away from a more serious affair. Its symbol is “Dist”.
 TORVALD: I’ll just look [He starts to go.]
 Nora, **at the piano, plays the opening bars of the tarantella.**
26. <Forbid>: Its function is to order somebody not to do something. Its symbol is “For” and it is realized by commands.
 HELMER: **You’re out of your mind. I won’t let you – I forbid it.**
 NORA: It’s no good your forbidding me anything any longer. I shall take the things that belong to me, but I’ll take nothing from you – now or later.

8. Moves

In the hierarchy of conversation, moves come after acts in the ascending order. A move is defined as “a verbal action that carries the conversation forward” (Stenstrom, 1994, p. 36). In simple words, a move comprises of acts and occupies place in the structure of exchanges. There are five classes of moves based on the function in the conversation- opening, supporting, challenging, bound opening and

reopening moves. The function of an opening move is to stir others to participate in an exchange and its symbol is “Op”. The function of a supporting move is to deliver an appropriate response to the opening move and its symbol is “Sp”. Challenging move is not meant to be hostile by any means. It rather aims to divert the direction of the talk in an amicable way and its symbol is “Ch”. Supporting or challenging moves can be easily traced from a text. Certain initiating acts demand the expectation of a certain other responding acts. If the expected act is performed, then the move would be supportive, otherwise, it is a challenging move. For example, every elicitation should generate a response that is, reply. If it is so then the move would be supportive. But if it fails to get a reply, then the move would be challenging. The prime difference between the supporting move and challenging move is that the former facilitates the topic presented in the utterance, whereas, the latter halts the progress of the topic presented in the utterance. Bound opening expands on a topic once it has been established by adding relevant and semantically cohesive details and its symbol is “Bo”. Reopening move is used when the speaker reasserts a topic in spite of the fact that the hearer has challenged it and its symbol is “Ro”.

9. Exchanges

In the hierarchy of conversation, exchange comes after moves in the ascending order. The exchange is “the minimal interactive unit and involves the negotiation of a single piece of information” (Stenstrom, 1994, p. 48). In simple words, exchange comprised of a dialogue between two parties. Burton has identified two types of exchanges: pre-topic exchange and topic exchange. Pre-topic exchange shows the intention to start a new topic and its symbol is “Pt”. Others will give a green signal which might be in the form of appropriate eye contact etc. Topic exchange deals with the main business of any conversation- asking questions, giving information, making commands and getting reasonable responses and its symbol is “T”. Topic exchange consists of 4 parts: stating, questioning, commanding and requesting exchange. The general pattern for the above mentioned parts of topic exchange is initiating and responding move.

10. Coding and Labeling

In the present study, determination of appropriate labels of acts, moves and exchanges is the main paraphernalia. Among them, determination of labels for speech acts is one of the most formidable tasks. The importance of determination and recognition of exact speech act can be judged from the fact that successful communication can take place only if the speaker performs a speech act which is identified by the hearer (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 57). It is not easy to determine the exact performed speech act because there is no one to one relationship between form and function. Also, one form could be used to perform multiple functions. The speaker performs a speech act intentionally and the hearer deciphers it appropriately in order to understand it. Once the speech acts are identified, the other labels are easy to assign. In the present study, the researcher has benefited from different taxonomies to recognize and provide exact speech acts.

The researcher has fully grasped the way Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Carter and Burton (1982) assigned labels to their researches and tried to follow the way they had given labels to the analysis of their text. Instances where the already available labels are found insufficient, a need for inserting appropriate labels will arise. While assigning label, the researcher felt that sometimes the function of an act overlap and it becomes difficult to assign labels especially of acts. In such a case that label is assigned which seems more appropriate to the act. In order to overcome the above-mentioned problem, the researcher has kept in mind the way Searle has mentioned three ways in which speech act varies (as cited in Coulthard, 1985, p. 24).

1. The difference between speech acts can be studied in terms of their relationship between words to the world and vice versa. For example, difference between assert and request.
2. Speech act difference can be studied in terms of their psychological states. For instance, difference between believe and express.
3. The most important criterion to study the difference among speech acts is to assess in terms of purpose.

While assigning labels, the researcher has generalized the above-mentioned procedure given by Searle and applies it to identify acts, moves and exchanges in the present study.

11. Selection of Relevant Text for Analysis

The source of data is limited to the dialogues between the two main characters, Nora and Helmer, in Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*. The text is selected keeping in view the golden principles of economy and representativeness. That is why only that part of the text is analyzed that constitutes a dialogue between Nora and Helmer. This is not to undermine the role played by other dialogues, but the analyses of other dialogues do not fall under the purview of this research. Further, the text is divided into two elaborate events in order to analyze thoroughly: the first event occurs in the very opening part of the play and it constitutes the first two acts of the play, while the second event includes the final part of the play that is the event of slamming the door.

12. Findings

The findings are based on two elaborate events: the first occurring in the very opening part of the play and second constituting the final part of the play. A summary of the speech acts, moves and exchange being performed by Helmer and Nora is presented below:

Event 1: Dependent wife-Dominant Husband Event

Table 1: Acts

Helmer's Speech Acts	Frequency	Nora's Speech Acts	Frequency
Elicit	28	Elicit	9
Inform	25	Inform	2
Comment	22	Comment	10
Evaluate	11	Evaluate	3
Marker	10	Marker	0
Acknowledge	7	Acknowledge	8
Reply	6	Reply	22
Accuse	6	Accuse	0
Direct	6	Direct	0
React	5	React	16
Suppose	4	Suppose	0
Prompt	3	Prompt	0
Summon	3	Summon	1
Accept	3	Accept	0
Opine	2	Opine	0

Forbid	1	Forbid	0
Opine	0	Opine	1
Surprise	0	Surprise	4
Agree	0	Agree	2
Desire	0	Desire	2
Excuse	0	Excuse	1
Request	0	Request	22
Accept	0	Accept	5
Check	0	Check	5
Distract	0	Distract	5

Table 2: Moves

Helmer's Moves	Frequency	Nora's Moves	Frequency
Opening	38	Opening	18
Supportive	26	Supportive	76
Bound opening	26	Bound opening	0
Reopening	12	Reopening	1
Challenging	1	Challenging	8

Table 3: Exchanges

Exchanges between Helmer and Nora	Frequency
Topic	87
Pre-topic	14

Event 2: Confrontation Event

Table 4: Acts

Helmer's Speech Acts	Frequency	Nora's Speech Acts	Frequency
Surprise	25	Surprise	0
Comment	17	Comment	9
Elicit	17	Elicit	3
Request	13	Request	0
Evaluate	5	Evaluate	0
Direct	5	Direct	3
Summon	5	Summon	1
Accuse	4	Accuse	2
React	2	React	17
Check	2	Check	2
Accept	1	Accept	3
Inform	1	Inform	19
Reply	1	Reply	4
Acknowledge	1	Acknowledge	1
Excuse	1	Excuse	0
Forbid	1	Forbid	3
Agree	1	Agree	3

Marker	1	Marker	1
Opine	1	Opine	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	2
Realize	0	Realize	13
Resolve	0	Resolve	9

Table 5: **Moves**

Helmer's Moves	Frequency	Nora's Moves	Frequency
Opening	33	Opening	3
Supportive	18	Supportive	33
Challenging	15	Challenging	41
Reopening	9	Reopening	0
Bound opening	7	Bound opening	4

Table 6: **Exchanges**

Exchanges between Helmer and Nora	Frequency
Topic	76
Pre-topic	2

The analysis of the play in terms of acts, moves and exchange helps us to identify the gender roles of Helmer and Nora. In table 1, the highest frequency of acts performed by Helmer is elicit, whereas, the highest number of acts performed by Nora is requests. The ratios of elicit act and request act performed by Helmer and Nora are 7:2 and 22:0 respectively. We come to know through the summary of table 1 that Helmer has not performed even a single request in this event, whereas, in Nora's dialogues, there are 22 requests. The highest frequency of elicit acts speak at length about the fact that Helmer is controlling the discourse and Nora is being controlled and guided at every step. This is evident from the number of requests she makes to accommodate Krogstad. The acts of Nora clearly depict her as a submissive woman who surrenders in front of the authority of Helmer. This shows that gender roles are quite traditional and hierarchal in this event, that is, the traditional roles of husband and wife are portrayed in which power, control and authority rests with the husband. In table 1, the analysis portrays Helmer at the helm of affairs, stating all the rules about managing his house, just like a teacher who controls and manages a classroom and Nora is his doll whom he possesses and whom he must guide - not letting her influence his decisions. The study of acts clearly points out the fact that Helmer is controlling the life of Nora and Nora's existence is no more than a sex object. In other words, she is a non-entity in the whole episode of Helmer's life.

An elaborate analysis of Event 1 reveals the power relation between Helmer and Nora. Helmer occupies the central position being more powerful with a right to question and probe by using elicit, comment and inform, etc. On the other hand, Nora's response is confined to reply, agree, request and react acts. She has to defend herself by offering justification and assurance of her cooperation to Helmer. She almost fuses her personality into Helmer's personality, rejoicing on all those things in which Helmer rejoices. In table 1, the absence of direct, forbid and accuse acts in Nora's dialogues is a manifestation of the fact that she is not only dependent upon her husband, but also she behaves to strengthen the impression that she is subservient to him. She is having a doll life existence in which she has got not an iota of independence and individuality. She is supposed to merge her individuality in the personality of

Helmer. She is bound to Helmer about running the affairs of the house. This impression is also supported by the study of moves and exchanges.

The summary of moves and exchanges reinforces the same idea. In event 1, table 2, Helmer mostly opens the conversation by performing 38 opening moves, whereas, Nora supports the conversation by performing 76 supportive moves. This is a proof of her cooperative role in carrying on the conversation. Thus, Nora's suppression is quite evident from the study of acts, moves and exchanges. The analysis of the play in terms of acts, moves and exchanges speak at length about the patronizing and submissive tones of Helmer and Nora respectively. Helmer is speaking like a moralist and he esteems himself as a superior being, having a universal right to impose his ideas and beliefs upon Nora. Trask (1995) states that feminists have pointed out that "...to defer to the pronouncement of men, to seek approval from men before asserting anything of substance..." is a strong evidence of women's subordinate position in our society (p. 85).

However, in event 2, there is a shift of acts, moves and exchanges. In table 4, Helmer's acts are climaxed by 25 surprises, whereas, Nora performs zero surprise act and the ratio of surprise act between the two protagonists is 25:0 respectively. Nora acts are topped by 19 informs, 17 reacts, 13 realizes and 9 resolves to change the situation and to fight for her rights. Nora challenges Helmer because there is awakening about the wastage of time in the past eight years (13 Realization). This is the important discussion of the play because the reversal of power and role has just begun and the dominant acts of Helmer in this part speak at volumes about his helplessness. The identification of acts tells us that Nora is quite disillusioned about Helmer and reacts very strongly when she came to know about the true character of Helmer.

The study of moves tells the same story in table 5. Nora's moves are topped by 41 challenging moves as compared to supportive (as already discussed in event 1), dismantling the traditional image of women. Thus, Nora defies her traditional role as a dependent, weak, and suppressed wife in Event 2. She strives for her liberation and reconsideration of social values.

Moreover, it is often assumed that Nora's abrupt change in behaviour goes unaccounted for on the ground that there is no convincing justification for such a change in her character. In event 1, table 1, she performs 16 reacts, 10 comments and 9 elicits which is the manifestation of the fact that she argues, at times, with her husband and conveys her stance mildly. However, at the end she becomes defiant and revolt to the extent of leaving her family when she came to know about the true nature of Helmer. From the analysis of the play, we come to know that even at the beginning of the play she was not absolutely submissive. She does not accept Helmer's view about the need for being spendthrift and gives her arguments. Again she argues with Helmer when she recommends Krogstad's case. She does not hesitate to express her viewpoint in favour of Krogstad. At the beginning, Helmer is depicted as a man of principles but his morality collapses in crisis, whereas, Nora is depicted as a weak creature but emerges as a woman of extraordinary courage at the end. This has been pointed by Rekdal (2002) in the following words:

The contrast between Helmer's lengthy monologues, where he talks himself into calmness, and Nora's short, one-line responses, through which she reaffirms her presence, underlines the lack of communication between them. Towards the end of the scene, there is an exchange of roles. There, Nora regains the power of speech and,

according to some critical analyses, speaks like a man, while Torvald has no language for the reality that Nora tries to put into words (p. 174).

The present study does not follow the traditional division of the play into exposition, complication, climax and resolution. It rather divides the play into acts, moves, and exchanges. The reason for this division is that the traditional division is broad based and quite general in nature, whereas, the division into act, move and exchange is quite specific and helps the reader/audience vividly in identifying the true nature and function of characters in a text. Also, the study highlights the interrelation between Gender and Speech Act theory. The point of intersection between them is the element of performativity. The performative aspect of Speech Act theory has already been discussed in detail. Butler (as cited in Cameron, 1999, p. 444) is of the opinion that 'Gender is performative', meaning thereby, gender is not something fixed, unlike sex. Gender does not depict who we are, but what we are doing in conversation. Gender is a very complex phenomenon because its determination is dependent upon number of factors, e.g. class, status, group, etc. but the vital element in its determination is the way we talk. That is why, this research is significant because it highlights gender by dissecting the conversation. In Event 1, Nora represents the traditional female gender role and Helmer represents the traditional male gender role, but in Event 2, gender roles are reversed. As a result we come to the conclusion that masculinity and femininity are not innate or inborn. Our gender is what we perform, that is, gender is not something we are but what we do. It is different from sex which refers to what we are. Nora is no longer seen as a personification of female gender because of her awareness about having individual rights. She not only challenges her traditional gender role but also exchanges it with Helmer, which is evident through the study of acts, moves and exchanges.

It goes without saying that linguistic theories especially Speech Act theory is quite useful to the students of literature because it provides an opportunity to study language used in the texts. The added advantage of linguistic theories is to give an objective cloak to the criticism of the text. "Without linguistics, the study of literature must remain a series of personal preferences, no matter how the posture of objectivity is adopted" (Hassan, 1985). This is not to say that other approaches to text are faulty or to undermine their value. The researcher recommends that linguistic approach can be used, in collaboration with other approaches, to appreciate the text fully to explore the real sublimity of a text.

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