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Evaluation of Gendered Linguistic Variations in Henrik Ibsen's a Doll's House and Hedda Gabler

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Abstract:

In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze Henrik Ibsen's two plays- A Doll's House and Hedda Gabler from a linguistic point of view. Earlier researchers studied these plays mostly from feministic and sociological point of view, but this study will focus on Systemic Functional Linguistics and Language and Gender point of view. Not only differences in the speech of male and female characters of the plays, but also similarities will be taken in view. The purpose of the research is not to deny the differences that exist, but to prove how they reflect themselves through the use of language and perform day to day functions maintaining their status and roles. It tries to show that in these plays the language used by male and female characters is not gender specific rather it is situation specific.

Keywords: Gender, Language, Mood, Modality, Speech acts.

1. Introduction

The differences between males and females have long been of great interest. Researchers have tried to study the differences and similarities between them from many aspects. Apart from the basic physiological and biological differences, these have also been studied sociologically and linguistically. In 1960s, sociolinguistics began to study gender and its relationship to language, as gender is a social entity and sex is a biological entity. Specially, these studies focused around the differences in the speech and behaviour of males and females at the phonological level and the conversational styles of them in discourse. Both males and females have their different styles of speaking and both use different types of vocabulary.

This paper tries to study this difference through the language used by males and females, as it is a means through which people interact. And through the process of speech roles, they exchange information, goods and services. By performing speech roles, they not only exchange what they want but also affirm their status and role in family and society. They express their views and understand the views of others. Language is a systematic resource that always occurs in a context. It can also be called the interaction of language and social context. Halliday (1978: 03) also affirms the role of context by saying,

“context plays a part in determining what we say; and what we say plays a part in determining the context. As we learn how to mean, we learn to predict each from other”.

The theories used to analyze and interpret all these things in this paper are Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL) and Language and Gender theories. As Lynne Young (2011: 627) is of the view,

“SFL is a perspective for describing language both externally as a social and cultural phenomenon and internally as a formal system for expressing meanings. It does so through a theory designed not only to explain how people interact with each other through language, but to provide a methodology for the analysis of many types of discourse”.

Also, SFL studies the language patterns used by people. Halliday has given three metafunctions to describe the basic functions of language. These are: Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual metafunction.

In this paper Interpersonal metafunction is taken in view as it is language as interaction. It serves the most important function of language that is of giving and demanding- information or goods, and services. It helps in enacting our personal and social functions. Here the semantic system expresses the speaker's intrusion in the speech event: his attitudes, evaluations and judgments; his expectations and demands; and nature of exchange as he is setting up-the role he is taking on himself in the communication process and role or rather role choice that he is assigning to the hearer. This component is therefore both speaker and hearer oriented; it is interpersonal (Halliday, 2002: 199). Mood, modality and speech acts will be taken in view to state the differences as speech acts are the functions performed through language (Austin, 1962). Austin has maintained that producing an utterance actually means doing things. If Interpersonal metafunction analysis states whether the clause is declarative, imperative or interrogative, speech act states the function it performs. As for example, if the structure of a sentence presents it as an interrogative sentence, speech acts state that it is performing the function of asking a question.

The study of Language and Gender has long been of great interest but it is generally said to have begun with Lakoff (1975) who laid down certain features of women's language. Van Dijk (1998: 120) is of the view that, "those who study language and gender consider the analysis of language practices as a central task in the study of human relationship." This paper tries to study the basic differences laid down by various theorists as Cameron, Coates, Lakoff, Maltz and Borker etc. who viewed this difference on the basis of gender. And also the theory developed by O'Barr and Atkins (1980) who suggested that, the reason for powerless language spoken by women is not their gender rather their low social position and status (Bender, 2014: 405).

2. Data and Methodology

For this study, Henrik Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' and 'Hedda Gabler' have been chosen. A Doll's House is a male dominated play and Hedda Gabler is a female dominated play. But both plays represent the emancipation of heroines of the plays: Nora from bondings of family and society and Hedda from her life and society. This freedom and development of their characters are reflected through the language used by them. The shift of language is clearly seen in their dialogues. The methodology to study these plays is SFL and Language and Gender theories. From SFL, only interpersonal metafunction is used to analyze the dialogues. Since interpersonal meanings are related to the interaction or exchange between people and they are more prominent in the conversation or dialogues and least prominent in formal texts. The dialogues of various characters are taken at clause level for the analysis. For results, the analyzed data has been divided into various categories as representatives (which includes describing, asserting, concluding, hypothesizing and predicting, and concluding), directives (which includes commanding, asking, requesting and suggesting) and commissives and manipulative, dominance, sexist language, swear words, agreeing and tag question with the help of Speech acts (Searle, 1976) and Language and Gender theories, respectively. Speech acts help in clarifying the function performed as Downing and Locke (2002: 164-165) suggest that each mood is associated with an illocutionary act. As declarative is used to express a statement, an interrogative is used to express a question, an imperative a directive such as command and an exclamative is used to express an exclamation.

3. Results and Discussion

After the analysis of A Doll's House, it has been found out that total dialogues which show describing acts are 21 in number, out of which dialogues delivered by Torvald are 7 and dialogues by Nora are 15 in number. It shows that she has to describe things whereas Torvald doesn't feel any need to do so. In Hedda Gabler, total describing dialogues are found to be 91, which includes dialogues by all the characters. Under describing, maximum number of dialogues delivered is by Hedda, i.e. 40, then by George Tesman 24, by Judge Brack 18, by Miss Tesman 4, Mrs. Elvsted 4 and by Eilert Lovborg only 1. These results show that female characters in both the plays describe more than male characters. Eckert (2013: 117) also supports this as, "Women reported discussing personal problems, doubts and fears, family problems and intimate relationships more than men, while men reported discussing sports more than women. Women also reported discussing personal problems in depth more than men." As in A Doll's House, it has been seen that Nora and Mrs. Linde discuss about their personal matters. And in Hedda Gabler, Hedda discusses about her life and her problems with Judge Brack and she and Mrs. Elvsted discuss about Mrs. Elvsted's life. Females are not found professionals in their talk in both the plays.

Total asserting dialogues in A Doll's House are 25 in number, out of which dialogues by Torvald are 5 whereas dialogues by Nora are 20. Asserting dialogues by Nora are found to be only in the last act of the play. Torvald has no need to assert himself as he only has to say what is to be done, he only commands and directs. The results of commanding and dominating dialogues prove this. In Hedda Gabler, total asserting dialogues are 37. In this play, Hedda is more assertive than all other characters. She has 22 assertive dialogues while others have very less as, Mrs. Elvsted has 7, George Tesman 4, Lovborg 3 and Judge Brack has only 1 assertive dialogue. George Tesman's assertive dialogues occur only in the last act of the play. Where Hedda is assertive for everyone, Mrs. Elvsted is assertive only for Lovborg and once in front of Hedda. This shows that women have to assert themselves whereas men have the authority unmarked. They don't have to prove it or show it. Martin Rojo and Gomez Esteban (2005) after conducting a study of "female styles" in focus- group organizations, is of the view that, "men do not have to perform in any special way or to put on an act of being something they are not, and they are seldom seen as especially tough or authoritarian, because their authority as managers is stereotypically presupposed anyway" (Dijk, 2008: 203). But Linda Carli (1999), as stated in Eckert (2013: 142), thinks different from Eckert and others. She offers evidence that women using tentative, non-assertive language are often heard as incompetent but exert more influence than women seen as assertive and competent.

Total concluding dialogues in A Doll's House are found to be 19, out of which only 1 dialogue is delivered by Torvald and 18 dialogues are delivered by Nora. All these dialogues by Nora occur only in the last act of the play when she finds her relationship with Torvald based on illusions and decides to leave him. In her final conversation with Torvald, these dialogues appear where Torvald only says,

"And I don't understand you" (Ibsen, 1965: 108)

In Hedda Gabler, total concluding dialogues are 53, out of which dialogues delivered by Lovborg are 20, by Hedda 16, by Judge Brack 7, by Miss Tesman 4, by George Tesman 4 and by Mrs. Elvsted 2. Lovborg concludes about his relationship with Mrs. Elvsted to Hedda and about his lost manuscript, whereas Hedda concludes mostly to Lovborg and Judge Brack and not to her husband George Tesman. She admits to Brack that she was bored at her honeymoon as Tesman is a specialist. It has been found that in male dominated play, a female character concludes more, but in female dominated play, a male character concludes more. Thus it can be said that concluding is not related to the gender of speaker rather it depends on the circumstances in which a character finds him/her.

In A Doll's House, total hypothesizing and predicting dialogues are 5, which include 2 dialogues by Torvald and 3 by Nora. It shows that she hypothesizes more than Torvald. In Hedda Gabler, total dialogues showing hypothesizing and predicting are 9. Out of which, dialogues uttered by Judge Brack are 3, by George Tesman 2, by Mrs. Elvsted 2, by Miss Tesman 1 and by Hedda 1 only. Judge Brack

hypothesizes and predicts for Hedda only, whereas Mrs. Elvsted once for Lovborg and once for inspiring George Tesman. For A Doll's House, it can also be said that Nora has actually hypothesized about her life and when she faces reality, she feels it tough and decides to learn and educate herself, whereas Torvald is clever and practical, and maintaining his dominating position, asks Nora to forget everything he had said.

In A Doll's House, total claiming dialogues are found to be 9, out of which Nora's dialogues are 8 whereas Torvald's is only one. Torvald only says that there's no one who gives up honor for love. Nora's claiming dialogues occur only in the last act of the play when she feels confident enough to assert herself. In Hedda Gabler, total claiming dialogues are 8, which include 3 dialogues by Lovborg, 2 by George Tesman, 2 by Hedda and only 1 by Mrs. Elvsted. Lovborg claims once about his relationship with Mrs. Elvsted, once for his own self and once about the lost book. Hedda's dialogues include once her confession of love for George Tesman and once she says that she can hear the conversation between George and Mrs. Elvsted. It has been found that in male dominated play, female character claims more while in a female dominated play, male characters claim more.

In A Doll's House, total commanding dialogues are 5, out of which 4 dialogues are by Torvald and only 1 dialogue is by Nora. Also, most of the commanding dialogues by Torvald are mentioned under dominating section. In Hedda Gabler, total commanding dialogues are 7 and all these commanding dialogues are delivered by Hedda only. She commands both Judge Brack and Lovborg. This also shows that she commands the two persons with whom she feels most comfortable. She is never seen commanding her husband. Coates (1986) views that men command more than women. She says, "it seems that men pursue a style of interaction based on power, while women pursue a style based on solidarity and support" (115). This view supports the results of A Doll's House but not the results of Hedda Gabler.

Total asking dialogues in A Doll's House were found to be 39 out of which 26 dialogues were uttered by Torvald, 7 by Nora and only 2 were spoken by Mrs. Linde. This depicts that Nora only has to agree with whatever he says and he is in the position of asking her anything. Even he asks her trivial questions like:

"When did my squirrel get in?" (Ibsen, 1965: 44)

"And what's in that package there?" (Ibsen, 1965: 45)

The need to know even trifles shows that he wants her to be under his control every time and he should be aware of whatever she does and why. Also Eggins and Slade (1997: 87) state that "wh-interrogatives can also be used to achieve commands." In Hedda Gabler, total asking dialogues are found to be 101, out of which, 37 dialogues are by Hedda, 26 by George Tesman, 14 by Lovborg, 13 by Judge Brack, 9 by Mrs. Elvsted and 2 by Miss Tesman. Hedda asks everyone as Judge Brack, George Tesman, Mrs. Elvsted and Lovborg. But she asks mostly Lovborg, i.e. 13 questions. George Tesman asks Hedda questions only towards the end of the play when he comes to know that she has burnt the manuscript of Lovborg. Hedda asks questions to Mrs. Elvsted about her husband and her life. Coates (1986: 106) quotes various research findings as, "women use interrogative forms more than men and that this may reflect women's relative weakness in interactive situations: they exploit questions in order to keep conversation going." Whereas Eckert (2013) is of the view that women's speech is full of questions which indicates uncertainty and lack of confidence. But the analysis of A Doll's House contradicts the view whereas Hedda Gabler proves it. It can also be said that the one who holds a dominating position needs to know everything and asks more questions.

Total requesting dialogues in A Doll's House are 11 and all these dialogues are spoken by Nora only. She is always found requesting Torvald for one thing or the other. She requests him even to decide what she should wear at the party. In Hedda Gabler, total requesting dialogues are 6. Out of which, requesting dialogues by George Tesman are 3, by Mrs. Elvsted 2 and by Judge Brack only 1. George Tesman requests once Mrs. Elvsted, once Miss Tesman and once Hedda. As Hedda is shown confident and dominating in the play, she is never shown requesting anyone. This also shows that the one who is dominated requests more than the one who is dominating.

In A Doll's House, total suggesting dialogues are 3 only which are all spoken by Nora. Her 2 dialogues are used to suggest Torvald about spending money at the starting of the play and one of her dialogue is a suggestion for Mrs. Linde. In Hedda Gabler, total suggesting dialogues are 12, out of which 5 dialogues are by George Tesman, 3 by Hedda, 2 by Lovborg and 2 by Mrs. Elvsted. George Tesman once suggests Hedda to tell Aunt Julie about them and once suggests her to come along with him at Aunt Rina's death and he suggests Mrs. Elvsted to rewrite Lovborg's book. One of the suggestions by Hedda is for Mrs. Elvsted and her 2 suggestions are for George Tesman. These results show that in A Doll's House, Nora suggests more and in Hedda Gabler, George Tesman suggests more. It can be interpreted as, in a male dominated play, a female suggests more and in a female dominated play, a male suggests more. It means that the one who is holding a subordinate position suggests more as he/she is not in a position to take the decision. Suggesting something also means that decision of considering the suggestion depends on the listener.

Commissives are "utterances that commit the hearer to doing something, and include acts like promising, vowing, and pledging alliance" (Dijk, 1998: 43). These are the promises either committed by the speaker or expected from the listener. In A Doll's House, total commissives are found to be 9. These include 4 by Nora, 2 by Torvald, 2 by Krogstad and 1 dialogue by Kids. Torvald's both dialogues are about asking promises from Nora. He does not commit himself rather demands, whereas Nora's 3 commissives dialogues are commitments and in only 1 dialogue she asks Torvald for the promise. Krogstad's both commissives dialogues are reminders that he gave Nora loan on certain conditions and promises. In Hedda Gabler, total commissives found are 10. Out of which, 2 dialogues are by George Tesman, 2 by Hedda, 2 by Judge Brack, 2 by Mrs. Elvsted, 1 by Lovborg and 1 by Miss Tesman. George Tesman's 1 dialogue is addressed to Hedda and 1 to Mrs. Elvsted. He asks Mrs. Elvsted to help him in rewriting the book for Eilert's sake. Lovborg shows full faith in Hedda and tells her about the lost manuscript and asks her not to tell Mrs. Elvsted about that. In return, she also promises not to tell anybody about that. She asks from him the promise that he will try to commit suicide in a beautiful way. Judge Brack's both commissives dialogues are in a way for George Tesman. In 1 dialogue he reminds George that he promised

him and in 1 dialogue he tells Hedda that he can promise that George will not join politics. Mrs. Elvsted in 1 dialogue asks for a promise from Hedda and in 1 dialogue she requests George to write a letter to Lovborg. As in *A Doll's House*, Torvald expects more from Nora but in *Hedda Gabler*, Hedda expects more.

Shawn Naito (1995: 03) in his review of Deborah Tannen's 'Talking from 9 to 5 Women and Men in the Workplace: Language, Sex and Power' says that men treat women's indirect communicative style as manipulative. In *A Doll's House*, it has been found that even men can be manipulative. While doing the analysis, it was realized that Nora's manipulative dialogues are 5 in number whereas Helmer's are 6. The dialogues uttered by Nora are like requests whereas Torvald's are to convince her stay back at home, towards the end of the play. He tries to rouse her conscience by reminding her of her children, her duties and her religion. And lastly he says,

"But you're my wife, now and wherever you go" (Ibsen, 1965: 113)

In *Hedda Gabler*, total manipulative dialogues are found to be 16, which include 15 dialogues by Hedda and only 1 dialogue by George Tesman. George Tesman's manipulative dialogue appears only at the end of play when he says that Judge Brack will be good enough to stop by and see Hedda. Out of Hedda's 15 manipulative dialogues, 3 dialogues are uttered to Judge Brack. She tells him that to live in that house is part of their (Hedda and George) bargain and in 2 dialogues she asks him the result if the pistol was not stolen. Rest all her 12 dialogues are used to manipulate Lovborg. At first she wants him to stay back with her, later she wants him to join George Tesman and Judge Brack for the party. She manipulates him by saying about Judge Brack,

"The contempt in his smile when you didn't dare join them for a drink" (Ibsen, 1965: 268)

"And besides, I noticed him smile and glance at Tesman when you couldn't bring yourself to go to their wretched little party"

(Ibsen, 1965: 268)

This shows that not only females but males can also manipulate. Maltz and Borker (1996) also suggest that both males and females learn the art of manipulation differently.

Under the dominance section, two types of dialogues are mentioned, dominating and dominated. In *A Doll's House*, total dominating dialogues are 66 in number, out of which those uttered by Nora are 09 and by Torvald 57. Dialogues delivered by Nora are only in the last act of the play when she decides to leave Torvald's house, whereas Torvald's dominance can be seen since the starting of the play. Torvald's dominating dialogues are like,

"You really will have to" (Ibsen, 1965: 45)

"But you can't be allowed to bring up the children" (Ibsen, 1965: 106)

In *Hedda Gabler*, total dominating dialogues are 14, which include 6 dialogues by Hedda, 5 by Lovborg, 2 by George Tesman and 1 by Judge Brack. Out of Hedda's 6 dialogues, 4 dialogues are used for Lovborg, 1 for George Tesman and 1 dialogue is used for Mrs. Elvsted. She does not say this to Mrs. Elvsted but she utters this for her only. George Tesman once asks Hedda to go and sit with Judge Brack and once he asks Judge Brack to accompany Hedda. It can be seen that both these dominating dialogues by George Tesman occur only at the end of the play. Judge Brack in his only one dominating dialogue tells Hedda that she will have to answer the questions asked by the police. He himself does not dominate rather says something about the dominance of police. Lovborg's all 5 dialogues are used for Mrs. Elvsted. He asks her to leave him and go home only when he realizes that he has lost the manuscript of his book. It can also be said that Hedda is the only one who tries to dominate almost everyone around her throughout the play. It is only at the end that someone can ask her to do anything.

In *A Doll's House*, dominated dialogues are total 21 in number and all of them are uttered by Nora. Torvald is never seen uttering any such dialogue. As at the starting of the play, Nora expresses herself as dominated and feels very delighted in that. As she says,

"Yes, whatever you say Torvald" (Ibsen, 1965: 44)

"You know, I could never think of going against you" (Ibsen, 1965: 47)

In the first act of play when she is talking to Mrs. Linde and Dr. Rank, she expresses her desire to say something which Torvald should not hear. She admits that she can't dare say. She says,

"I can't dare. It's quite shocking" (Ibsen, 1965: 59)

In *Hedda Gabler*, total dominated dialogues are 5, which include 3 dialogues by Hedda and 2 by Mrs. Elvsted. 1 of 3 dialogues by Hedda is to Lovborg asking if she is a coward and her 2 dialogues are for Judge Brack admitting that she is in his power and he has his hold on her. It's just because he knows about the secret of pistol that she gave Lovborg. But both these dialogues occur towards the end of the play otherwise Hedda is never seen dominated in the play. Mrs. Elvsted once tells Hedda that she has made her miserable by telling Lovborg about her morning visit and once she tries to tell Lovborg that she can't be driven away like that. She says this because Lovborg was asking her to leave him and go home. The results of this play show that Hedda is the dominating one in the play, she is not happy in being dominated and when she realizes that Judge can dominate her, she commits suicide. Penelope Eckert (2003) also realizes as other Gender theorists that relationship between males and females is based on power and dominance, but she says that in day-to-day context in which these power relations are played out is quite different. And all this is exemplified through the selected plays.

Sexist language is the language used to demean the other sex, especially women. While analyzing *A Doll's House*, it has been found out that total sexist dialogues are 21, out of which dialogues uttered by Torvald are 11, by Nora 8 and by Mrs. Linde are 2. Dialogues by Torvald show his masculine power as a husband, dialogues by Nora are mostly questions or somewhat agreeing or in the last act of the play defending her and Mrs. Linde's dialogues are suggestions to Nora as:

"A wife can't borrow without her husband's consent" (Ibsen, 1965: 53)

She tells Nora that only husbands are capable to deal with financial matters. When she tells Nora what she had been saying the previous day, Nora herself says (pacing up and down),

"A man handles these problems so much better than a woman" (Ibsen, 1965: 76)

It shows that at that time, not only men but also women used sexist language. The dialogues spoken by Torvald and Mrs. Linde conform to the society, showing male dominance and sexism towards women. In Hedda Gabler, total sexist dialogues are 5, which include 2 dialogues by Miss Tesman, 1 dialogue by George Tesman, 1 by Hedda and 1 dialogue by Judge Brack. Where Miss Tesman and George Tesman talk about the nature of women, Judge Brack and Hedda talk about men. When Miss Tesman says that it's expensive to be with women as they spend a lot, George Tesman agrees to it. Hedda in her sexist dialogue provokes Lovborg by saying,

“There, that's what a man ought to be!” (Ibsen, 1965: 268)

And Judge Brack says that they (men) are not that true to principles.

“We males, sad to say-we're not always so true to principles as we ought to be” (Ibsen, 1965: 281)

Last section is of agreeing which includes both agreeing and disagreeing dialogues. In A Doll's House, total agreeing dialogues are found to be 11, out of which only 3 dialogues are uttered by Torvald whereas rest 8 are by Nora. Out of these, one of both Torvald and Nora's dialogues are used for Mrs. Linde, Nora's one dialogue is delivered to agree with Krogstad and 6 dialogues are used to agree with Torvald. In Hedda Gabler, total agreeing dialogues are 40, which include 13 dialogues by George Tesman, 10 dialogues by Hedda, 6 by Berta, 5 by Judge Brack, 4 by Mrs. Elvsted and 3 by Lovborg. Out of 13 dialogues of George Tesman, 6 dialogues are used to agree with Miss Tesman, 4 for agreeing with Hedda in first act and 3 for Mrs. Elvsted while talking about Lovborg's book. Hedda's 9 dialogues are used to agree with Judge Brack and 1 with Mrs. Elvsted. In her first 7 dialogues, she agrees with Judge Brack about her life and settlement and in last 2 she agrees that he has no power over her. Judge Brack in all of his dialogues is agreeing with Hedda. In first 4, he just agrees and in last he reminds her that what she is afraid of will happen, but he uses all dialogues for Hedda only. In her 4 dialogues, Mrs. Elvsted at first agrees with everything in general but in last 2, she agrees with George Tesman about writing Lovborg's book. Lovborg once agrees with Hedda and twice agrees with Mrs. Elvsted that the book was her child. Miss Tesman in both her dialogues agrees with either Hedda or what she says about George. Berta agrees only with Miss Tesman. These results also show that the dominated one agrees more with the dominating. As in case of Nora, she always seems to agree with Torvald while Hedda never seems to agree with George Tesman.

Total disagreeing dialogues in A Doll's House are found to be 9, out of which 7 are uttered by Nora and 2 by Torvald. Nora disagrees with Mrs. Linde once only and the rest all dialogues are delivered in an interpersonal conversation between Nora and Torvald. Also that Nora's these dialogues appear in the last act towards ending of the play, when she disagrees with Torvald that she has been happy with him. Whereas Torvald disagrees only with the thought that what is in the letter cannot be true. He seems unable to believe in the letter written by Krogstad. In Hedda Gabler, total disagreeing dialogues are 8, which include 3 by Mrs. Elvsted, 3 by Hedda, 1 by Judge Brack and 1 by George Tesman. Mrs. Elvsted disagrees with Hedda twice, once that she is mistaken and later that she wants to go home alone and once she disagrees with Lovborg when he asks her to go home and leave him. Hedda once disagrees with George Tesman when he says that they would trade in the new piano, and then she disagrees with Judge Brack twice when they were discussing about her marriage and the honeymoon trip. Judge Brack also disagrees with what Hedda understood about his views. Thus, it has been found that in both the plays, females disagree more and they disagree when they are asserting themselves. As Nora disagrees towards the end of the play and Hedda is disagrees throughout the play as she is dominating.

Language and Gender theorists (Lakoff, 1975; Coates, 1986, 2013; Eckert-Ginet, 2013; Wodak, 1997) are also of the view that females use tag questions as their language is weak and deficit. They lack confidence and in need of the approval of other person, i.e. males, they use tag questions. But the analysis of these plays shows that even males use tag questions and even more than females. Tag questions are used 3 times by Torvald, once by Krogstad and once by Nora in A Doll's House. In Hedda Gabler, total tag questions used are 11, out of which, 6 are uttered by George Tesman and 5 by Hedda. This shows that the usage of tag questions is not related to the gender of a person. It only conforms to the attitude of the speaker.

As far as modality is concerned, it

“refers to a range of different ways in which speakers can temper or qualify their messages. There are two types of modality: modalization and modulation. Modalization is a way of tempering the categorical nature of the information we exchange. Modulation is the way of tempering the directness with which we seek to act upon each other” (Eggin and Slade, 1997: 98).

Thus modality is used to interpret the things between yes and no. Modalization refers to the degree of frequency or probability whereas modulation refers to the degrees of obligation, inclination or capability. The more higher the degree used, the more confident a person is about what he/she says.

After the analysis of the plays it has been found that in A Doll's House, total number of times high modalization used by Torvald is 9 (6 negative and 3 positive), all expressing usuality and by Nora is 11(9 negative and 2 positive) but again Nora's these utterances occur only in last act of the play. Torvald uses medium modalization twice (one positive and one negative) and Nora uses it three times (all positive). Torvald uses low modalization twice whereas Nora uses low modalization once only. In Hedda Gabler, high modalization used by George Tesman is total 7 times (5 negative and 2 positive), by Hedda 5 times (4 negative and 1 positive), by Judge Brack 4 times (all positive), by Lovborg twice (both negative) and by Mrs. Elvsted once only (negative). Lovborg uses medium modalization twice (both positive), both Judge Brack (positive) and George Tesman (positive) use medium modalization once only, Hedda uses this type of modalization twice (both positive) and Mrs. Elvsted once (positive). In Hedda Gabler, low modalization is used by only Lovborg (positive) whereas George Tesman and Judge Brack do not use any such modalization. Hedda uses three times (2 positive and 1 negative) low modalization and Mrs. Elvsted uses once (positive) only. These results show that male characters use high modalization more than female characters. In case of Nora, she uses more than Torvald and that too towards the end of the play

when she feels herself confident and wants to assert herself. Hedda is shown more confident and dominating but she uses high modalization even lesser than her husband.

In *A Doll's House*, total number of high modulation used by Torvald is 9 times, out of which 4 are obligatory and 5 show willingness/inclination represented by will. Nora uses high modulation 8 times, out of which 6 (3 positive and 3 negative) are obligatory and only 2 show willingness/inclination. In *Hedda Gabler*, George Tesman uses high modulation value 9 times, out of which, 4 are obligatory and 5 show willingness/inclination. Judge Brack uses 4 times high modulation, which include 2 obligatory and 2 willingness/inclination. And Lovborg uses high modulation 4 times, 3 of which are obligatory and 1 shows willingness/inclination. Whereas Hedda uses 12 times high modulation value which include 4 are obligatory (1 negative and 3 positive) and 8 show willingness/inclination (3 negative and 5 positive). Mrs. Elvsted uses 3 times high modulation, which include 2 obligatory and 1 shows willingness/inclination. Both Torvald and Nora use only once medium modulation in *A Doll's House*. In *Hedda Gabler*, only Judge Brack uses medium modulation from male characters and that too, only once and only Hedda from female characters uses medium modulation, i.e. 5 times. In *A Doll's House*, Torvald uses low modulation value 22 times (14 negative and 8 positive) and Nora also uses low modulation value 22 times (15 negative and 7 positive). Mrs. Linde uses low modulation once (negative) and Annie Marie uses once (positive) low modulation value. In *Hedda Gabler*, George Tesman uses low modulation value 22 times (6 negative and 14 positive), Judge Brack uses 4 times (3 negative and one positive) and Lovborg uses low modulation value 6 times (2 negative and 4 positive). Whereas Hedda uses low modulation 30 times (13 negative and 17 positive), Mrs. Elvsted uses 8 times (1 negative and 7 positive) and Miss Tesman uses low modulation once only.

The results of modulation show that there is very little difference between the usage of male and female characters as far as modulation is concerned. It does not reveal the typical gender based characteristic. It does not even represent the position of speaker. It can also be said that low modulation capability manner dominates of all, whether positive or negative. And in modalization, also there is not much difference. But a bit of more responses can show the dominating or upper position of a character. The results show that the one who is more dominating and confident uses high modalization.

Thus, SFL analysis of the plays clearly shows the difference between the language used by both male and female characters in the selected plays. But this variation is seen more clearly in the language used by husband and wife in their interpersonal communication, as in *A Doll's House*, Nora seems to talk in a different manner to Dr. Rank, who is a family friend. Also Mrs. Linde is not submissive and suggests Nora about worldly things. The behaviour shown through language clearly depicts their relationships to each other, as when Torvald dominates as a husband, Nora very happily accepts his domination. She only takes a step against his wishes when she comes to know the reality of their relationship in the last act of the play. Then only the assertiveness and confidence are shown in her language. Whereas in *Hedda Gabler*, Hedda dominates throughout the play and when towards the end, she comes to know that her husband is busy working with someone else and that Judge Brack can dominate her, she commits suicide. Both these plays are related to the freedom of the heroines of the plays, whether it is freedom from family and society or from life.

4. Conclusion

The present study has revealed that there is a significant difference between the language used by both male and female characters in the selected plays. It thus ascertains the claims made by past researchers. The male speech pattern expresses confidence and dominance and female speech pattern hesitancy and dominated but the difference found is situation specific and not gender specific. It can also be stated that speech of the dominated one is similar, whether it is male or female. The differences found are not gender specific rather they are based on the position of the speaker. This is the language which O'Barr and Atkins (1980) named as "powerless language". According to them, the reason for the weak and dominated language used by women is not their gender rather their low position in society. They are of the view that anyone who is subordinate in power will use the language which is described as weak and dominated by Lakoff (1975). Thus, it can be said that language plays an important role in shaping and maintaining relationships in society.

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