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### DISCOURSE AND STATE OF MIND: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF IBSEN'S "A DOLL'S HOUSE"

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The current study tries to delineate how discourse reflects our state of mind, though the state of mind is not overtly verbalized. Our ideologies, feelings, emotions and fears are hidden behind the veil of discourse. With the aim of uncovering the hidden feelings and fears in order to examine how discourse is the mirror of our state of mind, the researcher selects Fairclough's "three-dimensional framework and apply it on Henrik Ibsen's work, "A Doll's House". The paper employs only one dimension of Fairclough's model that is descriptive. This study benefits students and teachers to get better understanding of the play and analyze it on critical grounds. The paper also presents an example of the application of "Fairclough three-dimensional model" on literary texts. It invites other researchers to carry out their researches in the present research field.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The present research work endeavors to highlight how the state of mind affects our discourse that causes to reveal what is hidden under the layer of our consciousness. For this aim, the researcher conducts critical discourse analysis. "Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA" is critical method for study of linguistic structures including words and their mutual relation in their political and social situation. "post-structuralist discourse theory" and critical analysis, it puts emphasis on how identity, knowledge, ideology, and power is

embedded in written and oral text. In his paper, Teun A. Van Dijk (1995) elaborates the definition of "critical discourse analysis":

"Critical discourse analysis" (CDA) has become the general label for a special approach to the study of text and talk, emerging from critical linguistics, critical semiotics and in general from a socio-politically conscious and oppositional way of investigating language, discourse and communication."

Considering the co-relationship of text "and social interactions and how language, ideology and identity are interlinked" with another, Fairclough (1989) proposes a "model for Critical Discourse Analysis" that contains three different dimensions to construe text. This method is called "Three-dimensional model for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)" (p.21). Fairclough (1989) propounds language as "a social process". He argues that discourse can be found as "(a) a language text, spoken or written, (b) discourse practice (text production and text interpretation) and (c) socio-cultural practice". He further maintains, "a discourse can be seen at various levels— at personal stage, at institutional stage, and at societal stage (Fairclough, 1995)."

These three dimensions to analyze a text are following:

- i. "Description – concerns with the linguistic analysis of the text.
- ii. Interpretation – concerns with the connection between the conversational process of construction and interpretation of the text.
- iii. Explanation – concerns with the role of social practices in the production and interpretation of the text."

The present study employs only first dimension of the Fairclough three-dimensional model. Descriptive dimension helps the researcher to conduct the textual analysis to uncover the discourse used in Henrik Ibsen's famous work, A Doll's House.

Painting the Nora's character, Ibsen (1879) foresees the "new women" being rebellion against patriarchal society and fighting for her rights. However, Ibsen's solely purpose of writing this novel was not only to contribute in the feministic movement but also to seek the right of every individual who has his own identity, sense, thought and feelings and resultantly has equal rights to enjoy equal privilege in the society. That is why; the present study finds Ibsen's A Doll House a suitable source of its study as it portrays Nora whose unexpressive fear reflects in her discourse. She wants to enjoy equal privilege in her house and this wish of her affects her use of words and punctuation.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To examine how discourse itself reveals whatever is hidden under the layer of our conscious mind

To uncover the unseen motives of the author hidden in the text, through the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY**

The present research is based on the given research questions below:

- a. How does discourse itself reveals whatever is hidden under the layer of our conscious mind
- b. How much a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is supportive to expose the veiled agenda of the author in the text?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis has always been used to conduct critical analysis of literary or non literary texts (Tayyab et al., 2021; Saeed et al., 2020; Javaid et al., 2021; Iqbal et al., 2020). The current paper also utilizes the theory to conduct critical analysis of a literary text. The focus of other researches is either to present application of the model or to read the text between the lines while the aim of the present study to trace out the link between discourse and state of mind. Amoli (2016) uses Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to critically evaluate the "Akhavan Sales's poem, The End of the Shahname." in order to answer the question if these three levels proposed by Fairclough can be applicable, along with other research questions, in a literary text of Akhavan Sales's poem.

Zahoor (2015) evaluates Kamila Shamsie's novel, *Brunt Shadows*, through the Fairclough's framework of CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) to disclose the shocking and dreadful effects of ill use of power. Amir & Mehmood (2017) unfold the views covered in the Tariq Ali's novel, *The Stone Woman* through Critical Discourse Analysis by putting the Corpus Study and the Fairclough's model into the practice. This paper explains this model in the following words:

"Fairclough's work is comprehensive and has the status of a school of thought in itself. He has described three properties of CDA: relational, dialectical, and transdisciplinary. He calls it relational because it basically deals with social relation and not entities or individuals..... Dialectical relations are between objects which are different from one another but still overlap.....As in discourse analysis of dialectical relation is not bound to single discipline but it is the to and fro across different discipline, so it is interdisciplinary (Fairclough, 2001)."

"A Doll's house", a Norwegian play written by Henrik Ibsen, has always been an attention of critics and researcher. Different researches have been conducted on the work. Different methods of investigation of text have been applied to the play. Joan Templeton (1989) points out the feminist approach of Ibsen. He clarifies that Ibsen was not least interested in women's right nor he was about to write the novel on feministic issue when he started writing the novel in summer 1879. But in the spring of that year, when he faced some scandalous issue, not only his interest in women's right was developed but also, he started to support feministic movement passionately. Then his approach in writing the novel turned toward the issues of women's rights.

Balaky (2016) critically evaluates Ibsen's novel on the feministic grounds in his paper. He highlights how Henrik Ibsen in his play, depicts a liberal woman who rejects stereotypical life designed by patriarchal society. In this way,

Balaky (2016) points out that Ibsen throw outs the stereotypical representation of woman in English literature.

“At first glance, A Doll’s House does not seem very feministic, but as the plot unfolds and moves towards its climax, the play challenges con-temporary misconceptions about women and the protagonist Nora trans-forms from a doll, a possession, whose sole purpose is to entertain her husband, into an individual human being.”

Hossain (2016) also researches on Ibsen’s play, “A Doll’s House,” “Ibsen’s Treatment of Women”,and finds out how Ibsen portrays woman’s reaction towards her subjugation, submission, exploitation, marginalization and her suffering. He appreciates Ibsen’s art to foreground women’s powerful character who takes stand against whole society to find her own identity.

Barry (2012) deals in his paper how issue of gender inequality is treated in Ibsen’s play, “A Doll’s House”. He asserts:

“Ibsen uses stereotypical gender attributes in his characterization of Nora and Torvald throughout the body of A Doll House, and then abruptly reverses the stereotypes in the final moments of the play to show that inner strength and weakness are functions of being human, not functions of gender.”

Yuehua (2009) spotlights on “A Doll’s house to ensure that if man rules over woman explicitly, woman can also challenge his power and rule through her strong ideological power. In male-controlled society, man owns the power at social, political, and domestic level as he controls economic.

Azam (2014) takes a survey about Victorian literature and image of womanhood in that era. In his research paper, an attempt has been made to discover “the conception of females and women's rights in Victorian period and Victorian literature.” Azam (2014) further illustrates that Ibsen’s “A Doll’s House “and many other fictional works of art made the universal readers mindful of the critical actualities of feminism.

“Henrik Ibsen’s A Doll House represents Nora Helmer, a woman who left home for self-respect. The home is described in this literary work as a house where women are treated as dolls, lifeless but plaything in the hands of manhood. The conjugal life depiction also illustrated the image of women. Nora’s marriage was arranged, and the consequence was in negatives.”

After reviewing the literature, it is found that many researchers have conducted their valuable researches on Ibsen’s masterpiece, A Doll’s House, in perspective of feminism and to highlight gender biasness towards women. The objective of current agenda is to critically evaluate the work in the light of linguistic model of study: Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework to CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) in order to examine how discourse itself expresses the repressed emotions.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### *Textual Analysis*

#### *Repetition*

Repetition in Nora's speech is observed throughout the play. But in the last act, act III, it has become more exclusive. The last act presents the most critical period of Nora's life.

"NORA: Oh, please, please, Torvald, only one hour more." The word Please is repeated twice.

"NORA (still struggling with him in the doorway). No, no, no; I won't go in! I want to go upstairs again; I don't want to leave so early!". The words of negation are repeated five times.

"NORA: Yes, yes, yes. I know all your thoughts are with me." The word, yes is repeated thrice in a single sentence.

#### *Exclamatory Sentences*

"NORA (almost voiceless). I knew it!"

"NORA. Oh! Everything you do is right."

"NORA (shrieking). Ah—!"

Her use of exclamatory sentences suggests her confused state of mind, her frustration, her hesitation, her fear about coming happenings. It also highlights that a woman has more emotions and feelings than wisdom as they are perceived by the world. But the reality is something else that will be revealed in the last scene of Act III.

#### *Interrogative Questions*

"NORA. Aren't you very tired, Torvald?"

"Nora. Nor sleepy?"

"NORA. Was he? I had no chance of speaking to him."

She makes excessive use of interrogative sentences. It seems to propose that she has no right at home. She is submissive enjoying no right even to think independently. It also indicates that she is unaware of her surroundings. She is never allowed to be aware of what is right and wrong. For everything, she has to question. It also suggests her confused state of mind.

#### *Short and Incomplete Sentences*

"NORA: And-----?"

"NORA. Nor sleepy?"

"The letter! Oh no, no, Torvald!"

"NORA. So, he is."

"NORA (she steps nearer him). Torvald-----?"

"NORA. And I!"

Nora utters short and often incomplete sentences. It seems that she feels no energy and has no courage to speak before Torvald who has given no freedom to her. It clarifies the role of both genders; one is dominating ruling over the other passive creature and other is forced to submit before that dominating creature.

### *Calling Her Husband with His Name in Every Second Sentence*

Nora calls her husband by his name fifteen times before the scene when he opens the letter in Act III. Some of the utterances are given below for evidence:

“NORA: Oh, please, please, Torvald, only one hour more.”

“NORA: The letter! Oh no, no, Torvald!”

“NORA: (her arms around his neck). Torvald! goodnight, good-night.”

“NORA: ..... Oh no, no, no, not yet. Torvald, goodbye—! good-bye, my little ones—!”

“NORA. Oh, Torvald, you'll be sorry someday you didn't let me stop, if only for one-half hour.”

“NORA. Aren't you very tired, Torvald?”

“The letter! Oh no, no, Torvald!”

“NORA (u step nearer him). Torvald-----?”

### *Punctuation*

In Act III, we can notice that use of punctuation in Nora's dialogues before Helmer unseals the letter is very different from the use of punctuation she makes when everything turns, and she realizes herself an independent human being.

### *Comma*

The aim of using comma is to give short pause. Nora gives short pauses to take time to think as she is not clear whether she should say what she is about to say. It reflects her confused state of mind and her uncertainty to raise voice about herself.

“NORA. Oh, please, please, **Torvald**, only one hour more.”

“NORA. Yes, yes, yes. I know all your thoughts are with me.”

“NORA. No, never; I thought I was, but I never was.”

### *Question marks:*

Question marks are used at the end of interrogative sentences. Her excessive use of interrogative sentences shows her submissive behaviour.

“NORA. Have you been sitting here waiting for me?”

“NORA: Torvald, what are you doing there?”

“NORA (starts). Did you hear?”

“NORA. The lock-----?”

### *Dashes:*

Dashes are used to give longer pause than a comma. Nora also makes use of dashes in her speech to give longer pauses as she needs time to think.

“Both of us would have to change so that— Oh, Torvald, I no longer believe in miracles.”

“NORA. No, that's just it. You don't understand me; and I have never understood you—till to-night.”

“NORA. During eight whole years and more—ever since the day we first met—we have never exchanged one serious word about serious things”

“NORA. Yes—like this!”

Among all signs of punctuation, the use of dashes is more observed. Dashes point out sudden turn in thoughts and feelings within a single utterance. For instance, “Actually I wish to – sorry! I disturb you.”. The dash here signifies some sudden interruption in thought. Another example, “I – I actually want to say – I – I love you.” Here, the dash hints pause that implies a confused state of mind or some kind of hesitation or lack of confidence in expressing himself.

### *Exclamation marks:*

Exclamation marks express outburst feelings and emotions. Here also, exclamation marks show Nora's feelings of confusion, fear, despair and disappointment.

“NORA (at the window). The letter! Oh no, no, Torvald!”

“NORA. Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me pass!”

“NORA. Yes—like this!”

“NORA. There we have it! You have never understood me.”

In the last scene of Act III, she has made us her mind, so, we find change in her structure of dialogues and in use of punctuation etc.

The text of the last part of Act III is separately analyzed as there is an obvious change in Nora's tone and language. In the last part, she has wakened, and her eyes have opened. The first time she realizes what position she has at Helmer's home; not more than merely a doll.

She uses complete sentences as she is now clear in her thoughts.

“NORA. I thank you for your forgiveness. (Goes out, right.)”

“NORA: Yes, Torvald; now I have changed my dress.”

“NORA (Looking at her watch). It'd not go late yet. Sit down.”

Her tone is authoritative. Now we find a slight shift in gender role.

“NORA. Sit down. It will take some time; I have much to talk over with you.”

Her use of interrogative sentences shows that even at this stage, she tries to be polite and avoid being a cause of annoyance on Helmer's face.

“NORA (after a short silence). Does not one thing strike you as we sit here?”

In the above example, she is still indirect. But this time there are different motives behind being indirect. She wants Helmer to realize the change. Constantly, we find complete sentences. In the dialogues of the last part of Act III, there is less use of gapes, pauses and dashes. Only a few instances we find where gapes are found. As she does in the first part of Act III, she keeps using the plural pronoun, **we**, in Act III to force that the relationship they have is now going to apart and the pronoun **we** will be apart in **you** and **I**. Few utterances are given below:

“NORA. We have been married for eight years. Does it not strike you that thig is the first time **we** two, you and I, man and wife, have talked together seriously?”

“NORA. During eight whole years and more—ever since the day we first met—**we** have never exchanged one serious word about serious things.”

As the play further progresses, Nora uses the singular pronoun, I, You and He, as we find in the following excerpts.

“NORA: Yes, it is gone, Torvald. While **I** was at home with father, **he** used to tell **me** all his opinions, and **I** held the same opinions. If **I** had others **I** concealed them, because **he** would not have liked it. **He** used to call **me** his doll child and play with **me** as **I** played with **my** dolls. Then **I** came to live in **your** house—”

In the given instances, we can know how she has realized her own identity independent of her husband and her father as well. She uses the pronoun **we**, neither to attach herself with father nor with her husband. Now she discovers herself a completely alive person who can think and take decision independently.

It is also noticed that in the last scene of Act III, she minimizes the use of Helmer's name as we observed in the first scene, in every second sentence, she calls his name. But in the last scene hardly, thrice she calls him with his name.

### *Use of Dashes*

The last scene of Act III is pregnant with dashes in Nora's dialogues. An example is given below:

Act III, last scene (p. 78):

“NORA: (Getting up.) Torvald – it was then it dawned on me that for eight years I had been living here with a strange man and had borne him three children –. Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself into little bits!”

Here, the dashes highlight the small pauses of silence in Nora's dialogues. They indicate a powerful and strong flow of complex emotions –



disappointment, disillusionment, frustration, torture, torment, self-restraint and denial. This speaks of Nora's unbearable and unspeakable aching. Since the topic under discussion is too complex and causes uneasiness for Nora to go on, the moments of silence guards her against referring to more categorical and clear proclamation of her devastating failure. It prevents painful and torturing memories burst into tears. Many examples of a similar nature can be found in the following pages. One of them is mentioned here. Again, in Nora's speech, as mentioned below, a dash is put in use:

Act III, last scene (page 124):

"NORA: As I am now, I am no wife for you. Helmer: I have it in me to become a different man. Nora: Perhaps – if your doll is taken away from you."

It can be interpreted that not only Nora is sad and dissatisfied with Torvald but also unhappy and not satisfied with herself. "I am no wife for you" refers that Nora finds what is deficient and missing in her as a person. That is the reason that leads her to give up and start a journey to get the best version of herself. The use of dash throws light on a short meaningful pause, along with a co-existence of two opposing states of her mind and heart working in her: should she quit her responsibilities and home, or should her husband be given another chance? On the one hand, Nora is engrossed with the imagination of disconnecting herself from the doll's house. However, on the other hand, it mars her imagination to think that Torvald is capable of rewiring his way of thinking and is competent enough to improve himself. Nora for a minute feels that if her husband is offered with a chance to better himself, he might leave no stone unturned in this regard. With another wave of reflection, Nora immediately brings forth a decision to leave. By realizing that genuine, permanent and durable change can only come into existence if she stops to be the puppet in the hand of her husband.

Last scene, Act III (page 79):

"Helmer: But to part! – to part from you! No, no, Nora, I can't understand that idea."

### *Use of No and Nothing*

Last scene, Act III (pp. 79-80):

"Helmer: May I write to you?"

"NORA: No – never. You must not do that. Helmer: But at least let me send you."

"NORA: Nothing – nothing –"

"Helmer: Let me help you if you are in want."

"NORA: No. I can receive nothing from a stranger."

In the last part of Act III, again gaps, pauses and repetition are detected. Being a woman, she takes time to think and take the decision. In the above extract, the use of "No" and "nothing" suggests that nothing is left behind. There is nothing left to think about. First society teaches her that women have no place in male-dominating society. Women are nothing but a doll in their fathers' and husbands' hands. But now she replies to society that she needs nothing from

man, nor she wants to get anything from man. Now she is an independent having no desire related to man and his things.

The silences and gaps seem to suggest that in the contemporary society where a woman has no right except duties regarding her home, her kids and her husband, Nora takes time to take such a bold step rejecting Helmer's every offer. Along with her struggle to free herself from every duty regarding her husband, children and home, she also declares that women are far different from men as she exposes that she will often miss and think of all of them even after getting separated with them. On the other hand, a man living with his family, his wife and his children never think about them except about his only self. Nora, again and again, repeats the words of negation to muster her courage to leave his house, to persuade herself to say goodbye to male-dominating society and to re-assert her will to find her own identity and not to deviate her thoughts.

After analyzing the Henrik Ibsen's play, "A Doll's House", it becomes quite clear that the analysis of the research proves how much Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is supportive to expose the veiled agenda of the author in the text and how Nora's dialogues become the reflection of her mind.

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