

Conflict Resolution through Communication: Habermasian Study of Pinter's *The Homecoming*

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Abstract

In his Communicative Action Theory, Habermas argues that it is possible to achieve an innovative rationality which has the ability to resolve social conflicts and reach consensus and mutual understanding through communicative action. This 'communicative rationality' rests on intersubjective recognition of Habermasian three 'validity claims': Truth, Rightness, and Truthfulness. Based on this classification and drawing on critical-qualitative research into Pinter's *The Homecoming*, this paper examines the speech acts of the characters in this play to see if they are able to redeem their criticisable validity claims discursively in their familial context. The conclusion which is drawn here is that 'emancipation' can be achieved through 'communicative rationality' only if all the members of family and, on a larger scale, all members of society have an equal share of power; and, 'communicative action' can be possible even through silence, monologues, and deformed dialogues which are Pinter's unique style in composing theatrical dialogues.

Keywords: Habermas, Pinter, *The Homecoming*, Communicative rationality, Communicative action.

1. Introduction

Is it still possible for the people of our century who "are increasingly isolated and cut off from one another" (Mayell 2009, 15) to communicate with the aim to deepen mutual understanding and resolve conflicts? Is there any hope for us to experience some kind of unifying consensus through argumentation in such a fragmented, alienated, and hyper-individualistic context of life? Can we imagine emancipation of our societies through an urge to consensual and rational communicative action in our capitalistically modernized societies in which we are constantly witnessing different sorts of social conflict that are, according to Coser's definition, struggles for agency or power to gain control of scarce resources at any cost (1967, 232)? The response of the majority of social philosophers such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse as the first-generation members of the Frankfurt School to these questions is unanimously and decisively negative. However, the answer of Jurgen Habermas, as one of the most important contemporary social theorists, is Yes. This positive answer is based on his

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Communicative Action Theory which is rooted in his reconstruction of “classical figures – Kant, Hegel, Marx, Dilthey, Weber, Freud, Durkheim, Parsons, Mead and others” (Pusey 2002, 33). In this regard, the present study examines the linguistic interactions of Pinter’s characters in *The Homecoming* according to Communicative Action Theory and argues that since power is distributed equally in the familial context of the play, the characters are able to act communicatively and reach consensus and mutual understanding.

Habermas, who has a great influence on critical theory and social political philosophy, tries to develop a new theory of rationality as a substitute for instrumental rationality. He argued that if Max Weber became despaired about escaping from the ‘Iron Cage’ of modern capitalism, it is because he was unable to recognise the two opposing orientations of social action: mutual understanding and success (Habermas 1984, 341). In other words, Weber could not “conceive the communicative rationalisation of everyday action and the formation of subsystems of purposive-rational economic and administrative action as complementary developments” (Habermas 1984, 341). Habermas introduces ‘communicative action’ through a reconstruction of John Langshaw Austin’s ‘speech act’ theory that is an innovative way for analysing ‘meaning’ based on linguistic conventions associated with the words and sentences of the speech, the situation in which the speaker says that speech, and the speaker’s intention. He suggests ‘communicative rationality’ that “can be traced back to the central experience of the force of argumentative discourse which unites through consent instead of coercion” (Habermas 2012, 176) as an emancipatory alternative to instrumental rationality. Since instrumental rationality is using for calculating the efficiency of means to attain some specific utilitarian ends in capitalistically modernized societies, the integration of communicative rationality into our life-world will serve us as an escape road from Iron Cage (Edgar and Sedgwick 2005, 218).

In an investigation to see the frequency of researchers who have chosen Habermas’s theories to ground their Literature studies, few works have been found. Lara (1998) takes her lens from the works of Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas, shedding light on women’s literature to highlight the relationship between morality, identity, and narrative. In this way she successfully claims that women’s literature can be greatly helpful for recognizing their social identity. Botham (2008) examines ‘verbatim theatre’ to show the possibility of Habermas’s claim for reconstructing the public sphere through communicative action. He investigates *Fallujag* by Jonathan Holmes, *The Permanent Way* by David Hare, and *Talking to terrorists* written by Robin Soans to show that it is possible to bring the actual words of private people to public arenas.

Berkeley (2007) and Balme (2012) are other authors who bring Habermas’s notion of ‘public sphere’ within the context of theatre and performance. Berkeley uses Habermas’s theory to offer the concept of an ‘engaged curriculum’ for theatre which would shift its traditional interest from the formalist study of aesthetics and the crafts of theatre, to an exploration of the art of the theatre as a way for participation in public sphere. In Balme’s essay, we can read about new forms of performance which are extended outside the here and now of performative encounter into a public sphere on the web.

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The most relevant research study to the context of this paper is Neumann's (2012) essay: *Habermas's Linguistic Theory Applied to David Mamet's Films: Communicative Action in Action*. Neumann highlights some linguistic interactions of the films' characters to answer these two questions: what is the role of language in resolving social problems and, what is the best way for repairing linguistically mediated situations in a corporative and democratic manner. He analyses film adaptations of David Mamet's three plays: *Glengarry Glen Rose*, *American Buffalo*, and *Oleanna* through Habermas's Communicative Action theory. Even though little evidence is provided for proving such a claim, the author concludes that linguistic interactions in the film of *Glengarry Glen Rose* is insufficient for mutual understanding and cooperation and this can be regarded a critique of Habermas's pragmatic analysis of communicative action.

Many literary critics and scholars have written about Pinter's unique style and works. Apart from the high variety of content written on this topic, we come across researchers who usually describe Pinter's plays through expressions such as "failing struggle for communication" (Essline 1973, 217), "evasion of communication" (Knowes 2009, 78), "miscommunication" (Gale 2009, 92), "breakdown in communication" (Tecucianu 2012, 247), and the like. However, Pinter clearly announces his disagreement with all those expressions which are saying that his characters are suffering from 'failure of communication'. Pinter (2013a) says that "I believe the contrary. I think we communicate only too well, in our silences, in what is left unsaid and what takes place in a continual evasion" (12). It is this disagreement between the author and his critics that underlies the importance of examining the speech acts of Pinter's characters to see if they are capable of acting communicatively.

In further search for studies which are relevant to this paper's discussion, we come across with Johri and Pandey's (2012) article in which they try to study the patterns of human communication in Pinter's *The Homecoming*. In this study the focus is on the behavioural aspects of communication to understand the meaning of the play without any reference to Habermas's theories on communicative action. The study goes through a plot analysis and finishes by a reference to Waltzlawic's belief that "from pragmatic point it is impossible not to communicate" (49). The authors conclude that the characters in this play convey a valuable message through their behaviour by being silence or talking to themselves. Except for a brief reference to Lockean's theory about the importance of hearer's knowledge of the truth condition for grasping the speaker's message, there isn't any theoretical framework to clear up ambiguities such as what is 'pragmatic point' or 'truth condition'.

Considering all these existing researches, it seems that there is a huge gap for a more specifically investigation of the genre of 'drama' as a recreation of social world and an attempt to recast the study of this social discourse in the light of Habermas's theory of Communication Action. Searching for Habermasian notion of 'communicative rationality' in linguistic interactions of *The Homecoming* and distinguishing strategic actions from communicative actions in this palpable familial context are significant issues for investigation. The significance of this study lies in its emphasis on discussing the ways that 'communicative rationality' can be made manifested or repressed in speaking interactions of

collapsed families and societies whose norms and values are falling apart in capitalistically modernized societies.

Through methodological guidance on critical-qualitative research methods, this paper is oriented to examine Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action upon the linguistic interactions of *The Homecoming*'s characters in their local context in a search for communicative rationality. The Theory of Communicative Action suggests that 'communicative rationality' is accessible through an argument which is free from any kind of internal and external force – ideal speech situation – and can lead the way for consensus and mutual understanding. Analysing Pinter's dramatic dialogues as a palpable example of social discourse and exploring how they are "oriented to achieving, sustaining, and renewing ... a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticisable validity claims" (Habermas 1984, 17), we will examine the possibility for reaching mutual understanding and consensus through communication in *The Homecoming*.

The reason for choosing *The Homecoming* in particular is that this play provides a social context in which two different families encounter each other and this gives the main character, Ruth, the opportunity to secure her identity through communicative rationality. As Habermas believes it is by means of interpersonal relationships within family members that an identity can be secured through recognition. Also, since recognition cannot be won by force, it needs equal distribution of power between family members. The present study analyses the speech acts of this play to show that Ruth is in search of a new group of interlocutors who possess 'communicative rationality' and recognize her 'ego identity'. Ruth gains the opportunity to communicate with members of Max's family and to take an equal share of power as a new member of family. This is what makes her decide to stay with them in London instead of returning to her own family in America.

This paper's qualitative research design and its documentary analysis method help us to investigate the attempts of Pinter's characters to resolve their familial conflicts through communicative rationality in order to recognize each other's identity. The characters' linguistic interactions should be considered on the basis of their success in intersubjective recognition of criticisable 'validity claims' which are based on Habermas's classification: truth, rightness, and truthfulness.

2. Communicative Rationality and Communicative Action

In order to trace rationality in Pinter's *The Homecoming* through its character's linguistic interactions, we need to point to different kinds of rationality that Habermas analyses in his works. He begins with cognitivist version of rationality which can be used in two different ways: first, the noncommunicative employment of knowledge in teleological action and next, the communicative employment of propositional knowledge in assertion. The non-communicative kind of rationality is the one which has been used in our empirical understandings of the objective world in modern era. This non-communicative rationality is called 'cognitive instrumental' and is often under consideration in utilitarian terms. However, communicative rationality can be achieved through the force of argumentative speech that leads to unification and consensus (Habermas 1984, 10). Communicative rationality can help us to reach a decentred understanding of the world through "the possibility of discursively redeeming

criticisable validity claims" (Habermas 1984, 72). This kind of rationality is not monological and is open to improvement through learning processes since it is intrinsically dialogical and intersubjectively understood.

As stated in the previous paragraph, it is by way of argumentation that communicative rationality can be achieved. Thus, Habermas (1984) defines his own theory of argumentation. He explains that the logic of argumentation refers to "non-deductive relations between the pragmatic units" (22) which are called speech acts. This is opposed to formal logic which has been under the consideration since Aristotle's time onward and refers to "deductive connections between semantic units" (22) that are known as sentences.

Habermas defines four aspects of argumentative speech. First, he says that argumentation is a form of interaction that must be approached as a process in ideal conditions. Next, he considers such an ideal condition as a linguistic interaction between at least two speaking subjects who in a cooperative way search for truth. This linguistic interaction must happen in a context free from all kinds of force whether from inside or outside of the process. Then, he maintains that the argumentative process has to follow special rules. Participants must thematize a problematic validity claim, use a hypothetical attitude for solving the disagreement, and test the rightness of the raised claims by reason. According to Jari I. Niemi (2005a), justification of the raised claims is important because we can understand the meaning of a speech act by knowing what makes it acceptable. The needed condition for the acceptability of a speech can be known only through recognizing the varieties of justification that might be supplied to prove the utterance's claim (524). Finally, the main goal of the participants should be an attempt to conclude their argument so cogently that their hypothetically raised validity claim gains the capacity for transforming to knowledge (Habermas 1984, 25).

In his Theory of Communicative Action, Habermas emphasizes the distinction between the strategic action and communicative action and claims that the strategic use of language is parasitic on the communicative use of it. Niemi (2005a) locates this distinction in the point that Immanuel Kant separated categorical imperatives from hypothetical imperatives. He, also, argues that as a social analogue of Kant's categorical imperative, it is the notion of mutual understanding which is achievable in communicative action, whereas strategic action is managed to attain an end through some extralinguistic means (516). Although strategic and communicative action are both rational, Habermas (1984), just as Kant, gives supremacy to the rationality which lies behind communicative action. In other words, echoing Weber's argument about the institutionalization of instrumental rationality in the economy and the state (248), Habermas points out that it is instrumental rationality which lies behind the strategic action and supports it in success-oriented and utilitarian terms such as economy (85). However, the communicative action that is "the use of language with an orientation to reaching [mutual] understanding is the original mode of language use" (Habermas 1984, 288) and should be given preference in our social interactions if we are in search of emancipation.

The mentioned distinction in types of social action is due to Habermas's reconstruction of John Langshaw Austin's classification of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. As he explains:

Through locutionary acts the speaker expresses states of affairs; he says something. Through illocutionary acts the speaker performs an action in saying something. The illocutionary role establishes the mode of sentence (“MP”) employed as a statement, promise, command, avowal, or the like ... finally, through perlocutionary acts, the speaker produces an effect upon the hearer. (1984, 288-89)

He suggests that when a speaker uses perlocutionary acts in order to achieve his illocutionary aims he is performing a teleological speech act by the use of some concealed strategic action (Habermas 1984, 294). In simple terms, the speaker deceives the hearer(s). Thus, Habermas defines his notion of ‘communicative action’ as a kind of interaction whereby the participants try to reach their illocutionary aims by harmonizing their individual plans of action and by putting aside reservation (1984, 294-95).

Two crucial points must be considered in a communicative action: the specific context in which an utterance has been articulated and the needed condition for the acceptability of an utterance by interactors who are aimed to reach mutual understanding. To consider the first point, it must be mentioned that Habermas puts an emphasis on the ‘contextuality’ of communicative action. In fact, it is through an engagement with Richard Rorty that Habermas’s pragmatic turn goes toward contextualism “in which the truth of a proposition is always indexed to a context of justification” (Levine 2011, 244). The second point which is about the ‘acceptability’ of an utterance is explained by Habermas’s (1984) assertion that every speech act offers “criticisable validity claims” (15) which can be either accepted or rejected by the hearer. This acceptance or rejection, however, must be based on “potential grounds or reasons” (287). All speech acts with an orientation to understanding can be rejected based on these three grounds: (a) Truth of the statement which is a claim for “the existential presupposition of a nominalized proposition”, (b) Rightness which is a claim that can be solidified based on “a normative context”, and (c) Truthfulness which is related to the speaker’s “subjective experience to which he has privileged access” (Habermas 1984, 307).

After explaining concepts such as ‘communicative action’ and ‘communicative rationality’, it is time to examine the characters’ speech acts in *The Homecoming* based on Habermas’s three kinds of validity claim to see if Pinter’s characters are able to put aside reservation and harmonize their individual plans to access communicative rationality and, in this way, recognize each other’s identity.

3. Recognition of Truth, Rightness, and Truthfulness

In *The Homecoming* the statements are mostly articulated in a constative way, having ‘truth’ as their claim and pointing to states of affairs. This way of language usage in speech acts can be noticed in the characters’ frequent references to the objective world. The decision upon these speech acts’ being ‘true’ or ‘false’ can be based on “the existence of the state of affairs that are represented in assertoric sentences. If a statement represents an actual state of affairs or a fact, we call it true” (Habermas 2014a, 86). Habermas argues that the meaning of truth as a speech act’s validity claim can be decided only by the possibility of redeeming, limiting, or rejecting it. This is named ‘grounding’ of a claim which is only possible through argumentation (2014a, 87-88). It seems that reaching an actual representation of state of affairs in the objective world should be the simplest way for reaching to an agreement and rational

consensus. But, the characters of this play have difficulty making decisions about the 'truth' or 'falsity' of each other's constative speech acts.

From the beginning, the play's interactions start with some speech acts about some objects such as scissors, paper, advertisement, and cigarette which exist in the living context of the characters and yet do not lead them to mutual understanding. In the beginning of the play Max asks his son "what have you done with the scissor?" and as he does not receive any answer from Lenny, he says "Did you hear me? I want to cut something out of the paper" (Pinter 2013b, 13). Then they begin a discourse in order to reach an agreement upon truth of the claims which is raised by Max. In this regard, Habermas points to 'consensus theory of truth' and explains that according to this theory we "can attribute a predicate to an object if and only if everyone else who could enter into discourse with [us] would also attribute the same predicate to the same object" (2014a, 89). Thus, when an interlocutor in a communicative action is able to convince himself that the speaker is justified in predicating p of object x , they can reach an agreement, a rational consensus, and as a result mutual understanding can be achieved.

In *The Homecoming*, characters are not successful in reaching an agreement about their objective world. This lack of agreement on what truth can be in their objective world is not a sign of irrationality in this play; however, it is a way for characters to reach mutual understanding about their social and subjective world. In other words, the characters start from speaking about states of affairs in their objective world and use strategies such as remaining silent or changing of the subject to gain the background knowledge about each other and feed their interpretations upon their social and subjective world.

Supposedly consensus is the absent element of the characters' arguments about the objective world. As mentioned, Max points to missed scissors and states his goal of cutting 'the paper'. This happens while Lenny is reading a paper at the moment. At first Max does not clarify which paper he is speaking about and confronts his son's objection that he is reading the paper. Then, Max continues the argument giving some extra information about his statement. He explains that he means another paper which is "last Sunday's paper" (Pinter 2013b, 13) and it is in the kitchen now. While Max grounds the truth of his claim through representing the actual state of affairs, his interlocuter doesn't answer his question and their interaction changes its direction to a normative statement as he warns his son not to talk with him like that.

Silence and constant change of topic are common features of the way Pinter's characters interact with each other in this play. Regarding Kaufmann's distinguished variants of not responding in a communication, Habermas regards some techniques that are able to produce 'pseudo-consensus' in linguistic interactions. He says that a communication can be distorted when an interactor simply ignores the utterances of the speaker by being silent or when he forces a change of topic through imposing some content which has nothing to do with what has been said (Habermas 2014a, 166). When we consider the mentioned strategies, which can systematically distort communication, it is no longer strange that Max's simple statements about the scissors and the paper led him to a long monologue about an advertisement in the paper, cigarette, being a tearaway in youth, an old friend named MacGregor, and his deceased wife

while his interlocutor has chosen to be silent. Finally, Lenny speaks and changes the topic by intervening with completely irrelevant content to their communication.

Immediately another pseudo-consensual argument ensues, this time over the possibility of a racehorse winning. Now it is Max who takes a 'no' position against the validity claim which is raised by Lenny. Lenny asserts that a racehorse called Second Win will be the winner. However, Max rejects the validity claim of his son's speech act again through a long monologue and in this way provides his son with some background knowledge about himself. He claims to know horses better than Lenny since he spent a lot of time with them in his youth when he "stroked their manes, ... held them, ... calmed them down before a big race" (Pinter 2013b, 14). Max's vehement protest is over the unreal and abstract knowledge of modern men which is mostly acquired through media since he had the chance to fully experience horses existentially. Although this time Max grounds his reason for taking a 'no' position in their communication logically, Lenny does not participate in this argument and again changes the subject.

The most interesting example of disagreement over the truth in the objective world is the scene in which characters are arguing about deciding what a table is. This philosophical dispute is put forward by Lenny in order to challenge his older brother who was supposed to have something to say on this issue as a professor of philosophy. At first, Lenny tries to raise his philosophical argument by asking Teddy questions about "logical incoherence in the central affirmations of Christian theism", the way that "the unknown [can] merit reverence", and what he does "make of all this business of being and not-being" (Pinter 2013b, 38). Refusing to answer, he is challenged by Lenny's next question about what a table is, philosophically speaking, or what it is to 'take a table'.

Habermas in his recent book puts an emphasis on the contextuality of communicative action. Pointing to his 'linguistic turn', he argues that we must consider the contextualist challenge on the relation between reality and concepts such as truth, knowledge, and reason. Habermas says "that turn shifted the standard of epistemic objectivity from the private certainty of an experiencing subject to the public practise of justification within a communicative community" (2014a, 249). It is Ruth who challenges this 'private certainty'. When Lenny asks "All right, I say, take it, take a table, but once you've taken it, what you going to do with it? Once you've got hold of it, where you going to take it?" (Pinter 2013b, 39), all his interlocutors, except Ruth, define 'table' based on its preferred usage for them. Max declares his intention to sell it and Joey states his preference for chopping it for firewood. Each of these characters justify the truth of their responses about the meaning of 'a table' based on the way that it can be useful for them materially. They ignore the necessity of specifying a linguistic context for the constructed symbol, table, and a local context in which it is used in it through communicative action. And that is why their answers to this philosophical question are superficial and ridiculous.

In political philosophy, foundationalism is the claim that "justification must rest upon truths about human nature, human rights, rationality, or politics that are self-evident, rationally incontestable, or axiomatic" (Gutmann 2006, 178). It seems that through this philosophical discussion about meanings of 'taking a table' which ends ridiculously by Teddy's not responding and Max and Joey's immediate response, Pinter makes a mockery about 'foundationalism' having in mind Habermas's assertion that we

can access the validity of a truth claim only through a rational justification and acceptance of the counterparts of a communicative action in their local context (2014, 251).

It is Ruth who responds to Lenny's philosophical question in a way that can be considered as an acceptable answer in our Habermasian method for measuring the validity of a constative speech act. That is because, firstly, Habermas provides 'argument' as a benchmark for judging validity of a speech act's claim, and secondly, he assumes that decidability upon truth or falsity of a speech act's claim depends on its speaker and hearer's lifeworld and the articulated speech's local context. As mentioned, in *Theory of Communicative Action* there is a shift from action to discourse as a foundation for rational acceptance of reality. Thus, according to Habermas (2014), we can confirm the truth of a speech act's claim if we forget about "private certainty" and go toward proving the validity of our hypothetical statement through a "test of argumentation" (253). Such an argument must bring the interlocutors to a consensus and that is what Ruth does when she tries to answer Lenny through a parallel argument about the variable essence of truth.

Ruth speaks about the movement of her underwear as a consequence of her leg's movement and the movement of her lips when she speaks. Then she indirectly points to the possibility that these movements might be interpreted by her masculine interlocutors as a sexual display even though they are simply some physical movements without any connotation to sexuality. Also, the possible importance of the words which are articulated by her through the movement of her lips can be ignored since all the listener's attention is toward her lips. In this way, she warns them about the fallibilistic feature of their understanding of truth which can be passed or failed through a rational argument (Pinter 2013b, 39).

Thus, through a consensus bringing argument, the characters of the play must be able to justify three types of validity claims. After examining 'truth' of the constative speech acts, our next step is to pay attention to the character's regulative speech acts. The function of regulative speech act is to establish interpersonal relation through social norms and/or moral values which are 'right'. To find out whether the characters in *The Homecoming* would justify rightness of their speech acts through a rational communication, we must pay attention to the following points.

If 'moral' communicate is defined as a communication which is "in the equal interest of all those involved" (Habermas 1996, 108), can it be said that the characters in this play communicate morally? Do they reckon each other's speech acts appropriate in that local context? In other words, aren't the utterances 'out of place'? These questions can be answered through an argument which is aimed to ground the validity of: first, the contextual rightness of the speech acts; second, the norms underlying those regulative speech acts. The first aspect is about deciding whether the claims raised by characters' speech acts are 'right' in respect to their normative context. To determine this, we must pay attention to the intersubjective relation between the speaker and hearer in order to see if it can be recognized as an acceptable and legitimate speech act. The second aspect is a philosophical consideration of normative rightness under the title of "moral truth" (Habermas 2014a, 92). In this regard, we call a norm valid if it causes a universal interest and brings consensus for all those affected. Thus, we cannot interpret the 'normative validity' in a monological way (Habermas 2014a).

Niemi, in a parallel argument based on Habermas's simultaneity thesis, identifies a strong sense of normative rightness along with a weak sense of it. Niemi explains that in a communicative action, the speaker enters into an interpersonal relationship with the hearer and this relationship cannot be established if the speech acts were inappropriate or irrelevant based on their context. This contextual relevance is the weaker sense of normative rightness which do exist even in articulating of constative speech acts. From the other side, when we articulate a regulative speech act it has a "normative rightness claim in terms of the speaker's claim to an entitlement regarding a given speech act vis-à-vis the hearer" (Niemi 2005b, 241). This 'entitlement' is the strong sense of normative rightness.

In the patriarchal and competitive context of *The Homecoming*, characters are constantly challenging each other's right to say what they are saying in that particular context. There is a continual disagreement about the legitimacy of the normative context in which the speech acts are being expressed. In order to examine the cause of these disagreements throughout the play we must first identify regulative speech acts. According to Habermas the claims to normative rightness are verifiable only in cases of regulative speech acts that are those "in which either elementary imperative sentences (as in commands [and requests]) or elementary intentional sentences (as in promises) appear" (1984, 309). In the linguistic interactions of this play all the unsuccessful attempts to reach an understanding upon the constative speech acts ends to some imperative sentences in the form of commands, prohibitions, or warnings. For instance, every time Max tries to communicate with his sons, mostly Lenny, their communication fails and this led him to deliver a long monologue. Also, Max usually is interrupted by an utterance that he considers unacceptable and invalid normatively. Thus, he reacts by responses such as, "Don't you talk to me like that. I'm warning you." and "I'll chop your spine off, you talk to me like that! You understand? Talking to your lousy filthy father like that!" (Pinter 2013b, 13). Lenny takes the same strategy warning his father "You'll go before me, Dad, if you talk to me in that tone of voice" (Pinter 2013b,15) as he distinguishes an invalid claim to normative rightness in their specific context which seems as a father-son power duel.

The first moral conflict in the play takes place between Max and his brother Sam. The argument upon this conflict starts with Max's sarcastically speaking when he points about Sam's being single although he's in his sixties and then asks him "What you been doing, banging away at your lady customers, have you?". Their conversation continues as Sam's reacts by saying "Not me" for several times. When Max puts more pressure on him, he says he had never done that kind of thing in his car and left that to others. Then it is Max who repeatedly asks him "what other people" (Pinter 2013b, 17) he is speaking about; and, when he does not receive the proper answer changes the topic. Seemingly their communicative action which contains betrayal as its normative validity claim, does not lead them to understanding. However, this is not what really happens. In fact, they do understand each other clearly enough. The issue is revealed to the audience nearly at the end of the play when Sam sets himself free from the moral charge and in one breath tells "MacGregor had Jessie in the back of my cab as I drove them along" (Pinter 2013b, 53) and collapses. At this moment in which Sam reveals the name of the guilty person, Max is not surprised since he already knew about it.

The second moral norm which becomes the subject of the characters' communication is thieving of a cheese-roll. This argument upon normative rightness of Teddy's immoral action leads to complete consensus and understanding. When Lenny asks where is his cheese-roll Teddy frankly acknowledges that he took it and ate it. Then asks "Well, what are you going to do about it?" Lenny asks for an apology but his brother refuses to apologize saying that "But I took it deliberately, Lenny". This leads their communicative action to a kind of consensus since at the end both of them are aware that this "Barefaced audacity" (Pinter 2013b, 45) of Teddy's thieving is an allusion to his brothers openly committed adultery. As a reaction Lenny articulates a long monologue which is about the family's expectation to see "a bit of generosity of mind" (Pinter 2013b, 46) from their son who as an intellectual has lived in the United States of America.

We have discussed two different kinds of conflict which take place between the characters when they utter regulative speech acts. The first one was the violation of 'normative validity claims' such as non-observance of social etiquette and the second one was the violation of 'claims to normative rightness' like ignoring moral principles. The cause of these conflicts was that some of the participants in arguments considered "certain norms of actions to be right that the ego rejects" or some of them do not "accept the ego image" (Habermas 2014a, 153) of themselves. In this way agreement upon the normative background becomes practically impossible and the internal organization of speech turns out to be distorted. Thus, the characters' utterances do not lead them to consensus. The next step is to examine the expressive speech acts of the characters which are related to their subjective world.

When Pinter's characters speak about their own subjective worlds, it becomes complicated for their hearers to recognize the validity of their claims. Expressive speech acts have claims about their speakers' "subjective experience to which they have privileged access ... [such as expressions of] beliefs, intentions, feelings, desires, and the like" (Habermas 1984, 307). Thus, It should not be very easy to distinguish the truthfulness of a speaker's claim in his expressive sentences. However, Pinter believes that even when a speaker is unable to "present no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his motives" (Esslin 1973, 40), still deserves the opportunity for grounding the sincerity of his claim about his subjective world. Such a speaker will not be successful in his grounding process unless behave in a manner consistent with his claim.

The characters of the play constantly utter speech acts which have singular first-person pronoun as their subject and simple present tense as the structure of their predicator. In this way, they allow their desires or intentions to be revealed, their feelings to be expressed, and their secrets to be shared. These kinds of speech act will be successful as a communicative action if their speakers are able to provide grounds for the uttered sentence "by drawing practical consequences from it and behave consistently thereafter" (Habermas 1984, 15). As an example, let's review that crucial communication in which Ruth admits that she is unhappy with her current life:

MAX. But you're a charming woman.

Pause.

RUTH. I was ...

MAX. What?

Pause.

What she say?

They all look at her.

RUTH. I was ... different ... when I met Teddy ... first.

TEDDY. No you weren't. You were the same.

RUTH. I wasn't.

MAX. Who cares? Listen, live in the present... (Pinter 2013b, 37)

Through these expressive speech acts, Ruth makes a self-presentation. Now it is time for her interlocuters to accept or reject her claim to sincerity. They need to know if Ruth really means what she says; and, according to Habermas this can be revealed only through the consistency of her past or future actions (1984, 41). Nearly at the end of the play we see that Ruth immediately accepts the proposition of Teddy's family which is her staying with them instead of returning to America. The way Ruth behaves here directly and internally is connected with her truthfulness in the presented communicative action.

Something similar to this test of truthfulness can be applied to the different ways that Max expresses his opinion about his late wife, Jessie. It is interesting that every time Max remembers Jessie and talks about her, he mentions the name of his old friend, MacGregor. Incompatible opinions come as "she wasn't such a bad woman. Even though it made me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bad bitch." (Pinter 14), or when he tells his daughter-in-law "She taught [her sons] all the morality they know. I'm telling you. Every single bit of the moral code they live by – was taught to them by their mother... That woman was the backbone to this family" (Pinter 2013b, 35). In order to measure the validity of these claims to know which one is articulated sincerely, it is enough to consider Sam's utterance about MacGregor and Jessie which led Sam to collapse. Also, we have to consider Max's calm and normal behaviour after hearing this sudden news, to find out that he was already aware of this and was not surprised.

After introducing truth, rightness, and truthfulness as types of claims in linguistic interactions which must be validated to lead conversations toward 'communicative action' oriented to consensus and mutual understanding, it is important to know what happens if these 'validity claims' are violated. Also, since the purpose of this study is to examine whether the characters in Pinter's play are capable of reaching rationality through communication, we must see if there is any sign of systematic distortion of communication within *The Homecoming's* familial context.

4. Communicative Pathology of Familial Interactions

Habermas argues that communicative action can be systematically distorted if one of the participants secretly violate one of the three 'validity claims' – truth, rightness, and truthfulness – in order to pursue a personal goal. In this way communication continues with other participants' misconception that their interlocutor is performing a 'communicative action' oriented toward mutual understanding, while a 'strategic action' is being carried out without anyone knowing. Although this violation of validity claims

has pathological effects upon communicative action, it does not cause loss of meaning. The distorted communication continues till the violation is revealed through confession or recognition (2014a 154-55).

Systematically distorted communication has a potential for conflict. Within the familial context, conflicts emerge when one of the members of family feels that his identity is being threatened by failure of its interpersonal recognition. In such cases, the person whose identity comes under threat, secretly pursues strategic actions to defend his "ego identity" (Habermas 2014a, 156). If among the adult members of a family there was an unequal distribution of power, the internal potential for conflict would be higher in it. Such families suffer from "dominance relations and coalition formations, as well as corresponding tensions, discrepant expectations, reciprocal deprecation and so on" (162). The pressure of all these problems leads to identity conflicts of family members and systematic distortion of communication in familial contexts.

In *The Homecoming* we are faced with two different families only one of which has the symptom of unequal distribution of power. In this play, there are the family of an old butcher, Max, who constantly speaks about his dead wife and lives with his brother and two younger sons in London, as well as, the family of his elder son, Teddy, who is a philosophy professor and lives with his three sons and wife in United States of America. To know which family has the symptom of unequal distribution of power, it's enough to compare two opposite situations in which the play's sole female character finds herself, being a member of both.

At first, Ruth's share of power in her family as mother of three sons and wife of a university professor is unclear to us. Through her conversation with Lenny, we understand that she had her independent identity and was a photographic model when Teddy met and married her. She was a "different" and "charming" woman who is changed now to be just a wife and a mother in a family which seems to have symptoms of unequal distribution of power. As the wife of a distinguished academic man, Ruth was not allowed to continue her previous job and therefore speaks with regret about her past. She left all her belongings, acquaintances, and job in her homeland which all shaped her identity and moved to the land of opportunity where she did not have any chance for achieving an independent identity. Now, if she continues to be a member of a family in which there is no consideration for her desires, her identity will remain under threat.

However, symmetrical distribution of power between Max's family members leads the way to clarity and mutual understanding. From the very beginning of the play, equal opportunities do exist for all members to speak about themselves and freely articulate their opinions in arguments. Max articulates lots of expressive speech acts about his memories of youth, his knowledge and experiences about racehorses and his dubious beliefs about his brother using allusive sentences. Sam, also, takes his turn to speak about his being the best driver and the way he deals with his customers using his experiences and making the best of himself. When Sam communicates clearly and comments directly about the dead wife of his brother saying "All the same, she was your wife. But still ... they were some of the most delightful evenings I've ever had. Used to just drive her about. It was my pleasure.", Max's reaction is nothing except "(softly, closing his eyes)" and saying "Christ" (Pinter 2013b, 18). Lenny who has an active and

reasoning mind uses communicative styles such as joking and irony, speaking very frank or even rude most of the times. Finally, we have Joey who as a boxer and a demolition firm worker prefers to focus on his physical strength and to be less involved in familial communications. All members of this family recognize and respect each other's identity because power is distributed in an equal way among them. There is no need for them to act strategically to secure their 'ego identity' and they benefit from communicative rationality.

What confirms this claim is the obvious change in Ruth's behaviour when she finds herself in the context of Max's family. At first, she "is less than inarticulate – she is mute" (Hinden 1982, 33). But then she takes her share of power rejecting Lenny's request for touching her hand. When Lenny tries to explain his request by telling a story about a diseased lady and her certain proposal to him and the way he beat her up, Ruth engages in communication as an active interlocuter and asks the most appropriate question and this makes Lenny change the subject.

RUTH. How did you know she was diseased?

LENNY. How did I know?

Pause.

I decided she was.

Silence.

You and my brother are newly-weds, are you?

RUTH. We've been married six years. (Pinter 2013b, 27)

The main change in Ruth takes place when Lenny puts forward that philosophical discussion about the meaning of 'taking a table' and then she witnesses her husband's refusal or inability to give a proper answer and as a consequence "a field of sexual energy opens ... [and] Ruth is swayed to give up her previous identity" (Hinden 1982, 32). She participates in the philosophical argument and utters some constative speech acts which are a sexual allegory and then finds that all her audiences are convinced either by understanding her inductive reasoning or simply by listening to their favourite subject matter. It is in this crucial moment that she realizes the fact that if there was any opportunity for her to free her ego identity from the threats, she was facing by being just a mother and a wife in her previous context, it is through using her sexual attractions for stabilizing her position in Max's family and to be a member of it.

Teddy who is now the person whose ego identity as well as his dominance over his wife is under threat tries to act strategically and expresses his sudden desire to return their own home in America. However, he gets an unhelpful response from Ruth who is not a passive interlocuter anymore. Ruth tries to test his speech act's validity claims to know the reason for his sudden suggestion for returning back and if he is sincere. She asks "Why? ... Don't you like it here?... Don't you like your family?... You don't like them as much as you thought you did?" (Pinter 2013b, 40) but does not receive a convincing response. Instead, Teddy tries to gain her approval working on her feelings about their sons. Yet he remains in a position of weakness because he cannot ground his claims' validities. He ends his utterance by a constative sentence: "We'll go anyway, mmnn? It's so clean there." Again, it's Ruth's time to question about the truth of this claim.

RUTH. Clean.

TEDDY. Yes.

RUTH. Is it dirty here?

TEDDY. No, of course not. But it's cleaner there.

Pause.

.

.

.

RUTH. You find it dirty here?

TEDDY. I didn't say I found it dirty here.

Pause.

I didn't say that.

Pause. (Pinter 2013b, 40)

Here what has come to be known as 'Pinter's pauses' is the evidence for Teddy's search for finding a way to speak strategically. Finally, he cannot be successful in pursuing his strategic act which is bringing back Ruth under his own dominance.

Habermas directly says that "one cannot want both to make oneself understood and to express one's intention insincerely" (2014a, 151). This is exactly the case with Teddy's final attempt through this speech act "you liked Venice... I took you there" which has a claim for his sincere love for his wife. This strategic action leads to his defeat. Ruth articulates "But if I'd been a nurse in the Italian campaign I would have been there before" (Pinter 2013b, 40) and in this way explicitly denies his claim for loving her. This is a valid and timely inductive reasoning which points to the fact that if you truthfully loved someone you should have cared about that person's interest and allowed her to work toward her goals. It seems that the whole argument is fruitful and leads to mutual understanding since it is Teddy himself who informs Ruth about the family's proposal as he says: "Ruth ... the family have invited you to stay, for a little while longer. As a ... as a kind of guest. If you like the idea I don't mind. We can manage very easily at home ... until you come back" (Pinter 2013b, 51). Teddy is rationally convinced that his wife deserves her share of power within family and he cannot dominate her anymore and this rationality comes from force of communicative action.

To sum up our argument about the characters in *The Homecoming*, we can say that they are successful in grounding their claims. They communicate effectively and reach consensus and mutual understanding, since power is shared equally in their family. The linguistic interactions of all the characters, except Teddy's, are communicative actions. Teddy is acting strategically and his speech acts are oriented to his private purposes. Eventually, however, he is influenced by communicative rationality and lets his wife to regain her 'ego identity'.

5. Conclusion

In this study, we tried to investigate the possibility of 'communicative action' in the linguistic interactions of *The Homecoming*'s characters through Habermas's lens. We saw that the characters in

their familial context are challenged to recognize truth, rightness, and truthfulness of each other's speech acts. However, they can ultimately reach consensus and mutual understanding through communicative action. They are successful in achieving communicative rationality because each of them, as members of one family, have the same share of power. In other words, none of them has to take 'strategic action' to save his identity from threats of ignorance or misrecognition.

Considering the communicative action which takes place between Pinter's characters and their success in achieving communicative rationality, we come to the conclusion that emancipation can be achieved only if all the members of a family and, on a larger scale, all members of a society have the same right to participate in communication through an equal division of power. Thus, the notion that Habermas's Communicative Action Theory has "drowned in a self-regarding intellectualism that does not at all relate to the circumstances of ordinary people in advanced capitalistic societies" (Pusey 2002, 115) becomes acceptable, since advanced capitalistic societies suffers from lack of equal distribution of power. This study, also, challenges use of expressions such as 'failure of communication' for describing Pinter's unique style in composing theatrical dialogues, specifically in *The Homecoming*. Stylistic features such as frequent use of three dots and pauses, storytelling through long monologues, and deforming dialogues through use of jokes and irony are techniques that are provided for characters to act communicatively. Communicative action in this play not only does not fail, but works so well that Ruth gets the chance to secure her threatened identity.

فض النزاعات بـ "التواصل": دراسة هابرماسية لمسرحية (العودة للوطن) لهارولد بنتر

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الملخص

يناقش هابرماس في نظرية "الفعل التواصلي"، إمكانية تحقيق عقلانية خلّاقة قادرة على فض النزاعات الاجتماعية والتوصل إلى إجماع، وفهم متبادل بواسطة الفعل التواصلي، وتستند هذه "العقلانية التواصلية" إلى اعتراف تداوي بـ "ادعاءات الصلاحية" الهابرماسية الثلاثة وهي الحقيقة، والصواب، والصدق، وتدرس هذه المقالة على أساس هذا التصنيف واعتماداً على دراسة نوعية - نقدية لمسرحية (العودة للوطن) لبنتر، أفعال كلام شخصيات هذه المسرحية، لمعرفة ما إذا كانت قادرة، استطرادياً، وفي سياقها العائلي، على تعويض ادعاءاتها المتعلقة بالصلاحية، القابلة للنقد، ونستخلص هنا أن "التحرر" لا يتحقق بواسطة "العقلانية التواصلية" إلا إذا كان لجميع أفراد الأسرة، وعلى نطاق أوسع، لجميع أفراد المجتمع، حصّة متساوية من السلطة؛ كما إن "الفعل التواصلي" يمكن أن يتحقق حتى عبر الصمت، والمونولوجات، والحوارات المشوّهة، وهو أسلوب بنتر الفريد في تأليف الحوارات المسرحية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: هابرماس، بنتر، العودة للوطن، العقلانية التواصلية، الفعل التواصلي.

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