

## Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis at the Undergraduate Level with Reference to Gender Role and Position

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### Abstract

*The study focuses on the enactment of discursive manifestation on gender position and status in the second language classroom. The ESL classrooms involve the classroom participants in learning the non-native language through the explanatory discourses initiated and moderated by the language teachers. The classroom participants in any setting prefer their own socially constructed norms and values to be preferred whether it is ideology or power structures or any other preferred practices about women, men or society. Since, classroom is a constituent of the social growing practices; the classroom approved practices contribute a substantial part in developing and establishing social norms, particularly, in terms of gender issues. All the universities of the Islamabad were taken as the sites of the study where the undergraduate four-year English program is being taught. The study is a census enquiry where all the population (in terms of teachers) of the sites is considered as the sample; and all study participants were contacted to be part of the study. The data were collected through semi structured interviews. It was found that the gender is clearly differentiated and male participants of the second language classrooms try to dominate as supported by the teachers, too. Although the classroom discourses have freedom of thought and expression regarding the individual identities and views. In order to obtain reasonable and desired results in the ESL multicultural classroom, the teachers need to understand, perceive and sensitize themselves as well as to the students regarding the equity and equality of both the genders in the classroom discursive*

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*and non-discursive practices for a smooth academic process in the language classroom.*

**Keywords:** Gender, ESL Classroom, Discursive Practices, Dominance, Other

### **1. Introduction**

The foreign or second language use in the classroom carries multiple facets of social values, conventions and dominant discourses. It is another source that is providing a strong manifestation of the ideo-cultural and linguistic dominance in society upon the other social groups that privileges and marginalizes some segments of social adherents. It also maneuvers the social deficiencies and paucities and creates vacuums to fill it within as per their own scheme of interest. A notion of the classroom discourse which restricts it only to racial or cultural discursivity is another misconception. Rather it is all semiotic, curricular, and discursive circulation in society which continues to affect society ideo-culturally and socio-linguistically. It also indirectly promotes and affects the identity from person to polity. Classroom discourse is usually subjective and also causes the dominance of some of the groups which indirectly unprivileged a few members of the classroom discourse. For instance, we see radical changes have been taking place in terms of some movements and dominant discourses regarding ideology, culture and race. In addition to this, people and their language shift play a crucial role in these social, linguistic and ideo-cultural dominance and diversity in society. Some of the notions are based on fallacies that are very common among the agent people.

The current critical study also aims to investigate layers of dominant discursive practices containing gender issued in the ESL Classrooms at undergraduate level, which promote socio-cultural and sociopolitical thoughts embedded implicitly or explicitly in the classroom discourse. A classroom discourse cannot be considered as a holistic discourse of society rather it is a constituent of society, and social and cultural internalization of traditions is constructed through the same discourse. Moreover, how feminist and pedagogical principles are critically constructed and viewed in sociopolitical and sociocultural contexts in Pakistani classroom discourse. The directions of this study also include critique of gender inequality, the way we approach these dimensions is by focusing on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance.

Dominance basically, is the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups over the unprivileged, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality. This reproduction process may involve such different modes of discourse power relations as the more or less direct or overt support enactment, representation, legitimating, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance, among others. While teaching the content, the teachers give examples from different aspects of social, historical and cultural perspectives, which may include different ideologies, races, gender inequality etc. and even at times, the students' personal shortcomings for what the teachers seems unaware of (Kumar, 1999). Possessing a very focal and central position, the classroom contributes a lot to the values, traditions and dominant discourses as the leading practices, which the majority of students also accepts and follows willingly and unwillingly.

### **1. 2. Background and Limitations of the Study**

Classroom discursive practices have been the universal reality in the educational context around the globe. Everywhere, students and teachers are involved in the process of teaching and learning. Particularly, when a classroom is diverse and has students from different regions and religions, it comes across some subtle differences on the basis of cultural and ideological grounds. However, one important factor may be the gender equity and equality. Students come to the classrooms with their own backgrounds and the values they are practicing in their own contexts. As a matter of fact, the students from different backgrounds also vary in their practices, understanding, perceptions, and values in terms of gender. Like students, the teachers also come from certain regions and religions, and their discourses converge to specific thoughts and values. The sites where the study has taken place, teachers usually have normative powers and authorities as granted to them by the society and the religion in order to enact the content of the classroom discursive practices Lahlali (2003); as a result they can form dominant groups on the basis of culture, ideology by approving of some dispositives (discursive and non-discursive practices) during the classroom discourses.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Discourse and Gender**

Discussions on language and gender formally started in the 1970 which was mainly characterized by discriminatory language (Wodak, 2015). However, in In Pakistani perspective discourse, feminism and gender have

very close involvement in the classroom (Zubair, 2003). Similarly, when we talk of feminism, it is assumed that perhaps women are not given proper position in society and they are deprived of their basic rights. Talking on feminism from any perspective has become so controversial particularly on account of its interpretations, even, among the academic circles (Rasheed, 2016). Different people in different societies interpret it in a very different way. It has also been observed through media and general discussions that females are not in a proper position that they deserve most importantly, when they are compared with men (Carter&Steiner, 2003). Here, an important example is worth quoting from the Pakistani Politics as when a female became the Prime Minister of Pakistan; it was expressed as if something unusual had taken place.

If we start our discussion of females' existence in our societies, we might observe that they have not enjoyed their rights as they are depicted by different people or feminist activists. If we look back at the early literature, females are not seen as part of literature nor as writers. The place and status to women has been restricted in societies and certain patterns are followed where females are required to comply with. For instance, in most cases it has been observed that females are limited to household activities and males are required to perform all activities related to outside house plus all authority is also assigned to males too. As Vicinus (1972) found out that in England males were supposed to be associated with the public sphere and the women with the private. A clear distinction has been observed in associating the roles of males and females. Another progressive approach that gives power to the males has stemmed out of history, culture and society itself and it still continues. This also insinuates that women have different and subordinate position because western and other societies are patriarchal (De Beauvoir, 1953; Harding, 1986; Riley, 1988; Scott, 1988; Hill-Collins, 1990).

The word *feminism* includes many spheres in itself; however, it is mostly the endeavor to get emancipation of women and bringing them at par with men in society. A lot of activists are seen to be working for female rights whereas they are not considered as feminists. Forsthuber, B., Horvath, A., & Motiejunaite, A. (2010) asserted while defining the word feminism, they say that feminism is the struggle and commitment economic, social and political empowerment of women equal to men, which draws on and has instigated a variety of movement, struggles, and theories philosophies and campaigns (p. 18).

The cultural values and norms of the countries also correspond to the Islamic commandments at large being Islamic Republic. It has also been observed that the historical and cultural values, at times, give less value and power to females (Kendall, 2002). For instance, in many regions, we observe that still females are not allowed to go out alone rather they stay at homes (Chin & Quine, 2012). The honor killing type of systems are also in vogue although, the government is trying to overcome such issues (Gonzalez, 2000; Muhammad, Ahmed, Abdullah, Omer, & Shah, 2012).

### 2.1.2.2 Women and Discourse

It has also been observed that women also find themselves at a lower level when there is a mention of discursive practices in society. It is also because of the dominant social values and norms that mostly do not allow women to stand at par with the men. There are many quotations and adages that reflect that women stand at lower position than men in different contexts. For example some comments or quotation about females in courts are as under found in Obarr & Atkin (1986):

Be especially courteous to women (Keeton 1973, p. 149). Avoid making women cry, 'A crying woman does your case no good' (Keeton 1973, p. 149; Bailey and Rothblatt 1971, p. 190). Women behave differently from men and this can sometimes be used to advantage. Keep after her until you get a direct answer-but always be the gentleman'. (Bailey and Rothblatt 1971: 190-1.).

Taking females into discursive practices, we can date back to Otto Jespersen (1922) who very stereotypically depicted women as low status, less confident and less than men in society. He further says that women themselves are the linguistic deviants and they do not follow the normative rules of speaking. Jespersen also portrays 'the women' in his article as THE LINGUISTIC OTHER and the same has been quoted by Coates (1986) very often. However, this representation of females continued and was testified by Lakoff (1975) when she declared in her article that women have different register from men and lack competence in different aspects of language use. She found that women are deficient in language use. One refinement in the argument that women are deficit in language use is the so called *dominance approach* that stemmed out of the social values that give power to men. The differences in language use effect and reflect the power differences in society (Obarr & Atkins, 1980).

Later Coates (1986) outlined four features of the language of gender such as: dominance, deficit, difference and dynamic approach. The *difference approach* is the speech which is not gendered rather it is based on the speech itself as a matter of its significance. Here it is pertinent to discuss Thimm (1995) who discussed about two hypotheses on female styles of talk: Sex dialect hypothesis also known as genderlect of female register hypothesis and the second one sex stereotypy hypothesis. The former one portrays that both the genders differ in language use on the basis of their own actual language performance such as tag questions, softeners, and hedges and this has also been discussed by Crosby and Nyquist (1977). However, the latter one, also endorsed by Burgoon, Birk & Hall (1991), proposes that the judgments on gender language are subject to stereotypes rather their performance. Moreover, it does not fall in any gender category rather the interactional discourses support it as a socially appropriate gender construct. It can be viewed and substantiated by the approach “doing gender” given by West and Zimmerman (1987).

Difference among the males and females is also created on the basis of their wages that is visibly seen; also in the job training and promotion (Connell 1987, p. 96). Language contributes and reflects in the survival stereotypes. For example when we talk about men and women in power we use different words to describe identical behaviour by the both sexes such as: women interested in power are called *Shrew* and *bitch* being more polite; however, they have no equivalent for men. There are words for men who do not dominate their wives are called as, similarly, *the phrases like Henpecked* and *pussy whipped* having no equivalent for women (Lakoff, 1975, p. 162).

Contrary to the views as presented by Jespersen and Lakoff, in the subsequent researches, it may be observed that the social position of any individual is not subject to anyone’s biological or social position rather it has to be on the basis one’s performance. This was advocated by Coates (1986) and Zimmerman and West (1975) that males and females are not only the individuals divided on the basis of biological features rather they have their own qualities in different spheres of life and they should be given the credit according to their performance.

### **2.2.2.3 Classroom Discourse and Gender**

Feminism is a political movement and has been a focus of many feminist scholars around the world. Females’ rights are the right of females and

need be given to them. However, it is necessary to understand different aspects of feminism. As Peter Berry (1995, 2009, 2020), Showalter (as cited in Shukla, 2006) Showalter (2009) say about feminism that it has been divided at three different levels: Feminism, Female and feminine. Moi (1987) also explained the same as the word Feminism is a political movement for the rights of females whereas the word female is sexual category; however Feminine relates to 'a set of culturally defined characteristics' where female and males both are equally living together and striving for their own rights and objectives.

Classrooms are the places where the males and females both are competing together and their identity on the basis of feminine and males cannot be overruled altogether. At one point where they both are striving together for their academic goals; they are also competing for their social rights as males or females. The position of females as asserted by Shukla (2006) is sexually colonized and biologically subjected besides feminism recognizes the inadequacy of male-created ideologies in terms of spirituality, race and religion (p. 01). In the same way according to Roy (2016), Feminism is the cultural political and theoretical response to the patriarchal power structures in order to seek equality for men and women both. She has also pointed out that in Pakistan there are two types of feminism: Modern Islamic Feminism and Secular Feminism and both of them have differences which need to be clearly understood.

In classrooms, the description of the position of females or how the way females are portrayed and depicted will definitely be affecting the students of both the genders in the classroom by privileging the one and the vice versa (Bohmer & Briggs 1991). In Pakistan, at undergraduate level, mostly the education is in mixed classrooms where males and females are studying together. In a study by Herring and Nix (1997) and Herring (1999) it was found out that the female students participate more than their counterparts. It was further concluded that even in some cases where the teacher was male the same was found out that females participate more than males. Such levels of participation also define the social and academic positioning of the classroom participants which ultimately gives them power and control in the classroom besides chances of dominance.

The theoretical framework for the study has its roots in post colonialism and Poststructuralism and both of which address the Other self,

domination and Power structures. In case of gender discrimination in the classroom, it is necessary to view how females are presented and represented. These subtle nuances of relationships during the classroom discourse give power and identity to the students. Here it is important to discuss that such instances may take place in some specific and cultural settings where boys even dominate in the non-academic practices. Talbot (2008) in her study within the academic domain and out of the research countering the stereotypes of verbal incontinent of the quantitative evidence also suggests that men talk a lot even in public places whereas feminist research has claimed and produced extensive research that females are dominated by men in public talk. In the other part of this research men and women were dealt to be the homogenous group without problematizing gender at all. The study shows that with the encouragement of their teachers, the school boys dominate the classroom discourse besides men performing most of the university talk and participating in the seminars, academic conferences and management meetings. An interesting study by Bergvall (1996) conducted at the American school of engineering suggested that male and female were quite accommodating and there was *no-win* situation among them. The stereotypes were not seen at all and the classroom was found to be gender neutral territory with equal opportunities for men and women both (p. 192). The role of stereotypes is also very important and crucial in this regard as a study by

Later, the poststructuralists gave a new line and status to feminism including such other instances like feminism, marginalization, minority etc. Judith Baxter (2002) being the proponent of feminism during the Poststructuralism advocated that the status of men and women at equal levels and on the basis of performance. She is the originator of FPDA hereinafter known as Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis. She is of the view that the words like marginalized or minority have no place in the discourse rather they should be given more space in our discourses and identities (p, 09). Both CDA and FPDA put focus on the inequality and powerlessness of the females or other such un-privileged groups; however, CDA focuses on the ideological perspectives and FPDA focuses on the epistemological perspectives (Sauntson 2002, p, 125).

One early set of arguments proposed to explain gender differences in educational attainment focused upon the idea that, due largely to divergent



processes of socialization; boys and girls typically develop and employ different ways of working and interacting at school (Ellemers, 2018). The ways in which male and female students respond to curricula content, as it is mediated through various teaching/learning strategies in the classroom, have been associated with their differing 'learning styles' (Zelazek, 1986). Evidence for this was collected throughout the 1980s and 1990s: Gilligan (1982), for example, studied the ways in which males and females address issues in education and concluded that males tend to address issues in a more logical way, looking for patterns of cause and effect and rules of procedure. Males approach tasks in a very rule-bound, legalistic manner, whereas females are more likely to display empathy and place more emphasis on emotions and feelings than on rules and logic. These gender-based differences in approaches to educational tasks have also been found by Kelly (1987), who examined gender-differentiated ways of working in science lessons and discovered that the boys were more likely to choose to work alone or to compete with each other whereas the girls were typically seen as 'helpers' to each other and to the boys. Gipps and Murphy (1994) and Powney (1996) are of the view that there has to be equality of gender in the educational spheres. Other work has identified similar gender differences in approaches to tasks in specific subject areas such as Mathematics, Information Technology, English, Science and Technology (see, for example, Murphy and Gipps, 1996). These differences, then, seem to be characteristic, because they have been found across all age groups and across a variety of different subject areas. Girls' emphasis on verbal interaction and collaboration and boys' emphasis on individuality and competition is a notion which has been addressed and supported by several studies, including those which focus specifically upon gender differences in linguistic interaction in the classroom (Graddol and Swann, 1989; Tolmie and Howe, 1993).

According to Baxter (2002), it is not only the gender that makes the difference in the classroom discourse regarding gender roles and status rather there can be other reasons contributing to the construction of stereotypical assumptions regarding masculinity, femininity and binary gender differences. In addition, there can also be oppositional or resistant discourses advocating, for example gender diversity, inclusion and separatism. She also asserts that the discourses on gender will also be competing with the institutionalized or less formalized discourses with in the classroom context that might constitute teacher approval or peer

approval, discipline or punishment etc. besides the discourse in the classroom that involves in then teaching and learning of second language may be interwoven with the gender differentiation (Baxter, 2006, p. 08). However, she also says that 'woman' is a necessary category within the feminist critique of power relations (P, 12). At the same time, it has been observed by Norton (1997), who demonstrates the poststructuralist principle of resistance. She recounts the story of how Mai, a young woman from Vietnam and an adult immigrant to Canada, resists the way she is positioned as a listener rather than as a speaker on her ESL course. Moreover, the study by Baxter (2002) conforms to her three discourses – peer approval, collaborative talk and gender differentiation – that the male students who had got the approval of their activities were seen to be powerful and a number of quiet and conformist girls who were less peer and teacher approved found to be powerlessly participating in the classroom discourse. Similarly, according to Sauntson (2012) there was a discussion about the boys' underachievement in British education system in the 90s whereas the discussion and research on gender put the girls at disadvantage (p. 06). However, the researches in 90s also made it evident that girls were high achievers. On the other hand some researchers (Elwood, 2005; Francis and Skelton, 2005; Mendick, 2006) are also of the same view regarding the visible disparity between both the genders in terms of their difference of relation and overlap in the educational context.

### **3. Research Methodology**

It is a qualitative study where primary data is collected and analyzed. The study is exploratory in nature. A total of 33 teachers were interviewed on the subject. The interviews were semi-structured.

Unlike the approaches of classroom interaction analysis and classroom discourse analysis, critical classroom discourse analysis does not consider classroom as a mini society rather the focus of Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis (CCDA) on classroom is as the constituent of society. Classroom establishes and constitutes social set up through classroom discourse where most of the social set up, conventions and mores are addressed and constructed. In this way the classroom discourse constructs and constitutes the social reality in terms of social, linguistic, cultural and political patterns. Kumaravadivelu's (1999) model on Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis has been adapted to conceptualize the idea whereas Judith Baxter's (2002) model on the gender in the classroom discourse has

been used to analyze the data. Baxter's idea on gender in the classroom focuses on the following:

Gender differentiated  
Collaborative talk and  
Peer approval (Baxter, 2002)

Judith Baxter (2002, 2003) is known to be the forerunner, originator and predecessor of the approach. The operationalized model as suggested by Baxter regarding the roles and position of females in the classroom discourse has been extended to collaborative talk, peer or teacher approval, and gender differentiation. According to Baxter (2002), gender differentiation is considered to be one of the most leading, dominant and connected discourses among all the competing discourse during the analysis of all types of texts and FPDA regards it so. Moreover, to discriminate among humans between their gender and sexuality, Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse also regards gender differentiation as one of the most pervasive discourses across many cultures in terms of its systematic power (Baxter, 2005). The definition of FPDA has been developed on the basis of Discourses, power and knowledge and the underpinnings of the approach was originated from the ideas and foundations laid by the formalist, Bakhtin (1981), and the poststructuralists, Derrida (1987) and Foucault (1980). At the same time, it is also important to mention that it was also inspired by feminist work of Weedon (1997) and Walkerdine (1998) among others. Baxter developed this model of FPDA in her empirical research in relation to classroom spoken interactions which earlier extended to management meetings and gender leadership roles in the boardroom. FPDA, theoretically, has some parallels and connections with the versions of feminist CDA (Lazar, 2005a; Caldas-Coulthard, 2003).

### **3.1 Research Question**

How is gender portrayed in the discourses of teachers?

How far is the factor of gender discrimination represented in the classroom?

### **3.2 Objectives**

To highlight the position of both the genders in the discourses of teachers

To identify how gender is represented in the classroom.

### 3.3 Significance of the Study

The study is important and will be benefiting the teachers and students both in terms of perceiving the position of gender in the classroom activities. It will also be helpful in underlying the concepts of equity and equality among the classroom participants. The study is limited to the interviews of the teachers teaching English at undergraduate level in the universities of the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad.

## 4. Data Analysis

### 2.3.4.1 Gender

Feminism being a political movement for the rights of females is also seen in the classroom with the same bindings and features. The rights of females and their position in society is carried forward to the classrooms with the same and at times different perspectives. During interviews the teachers (respondents) both males and females gave their views about the status and position of females in the classroom discourse. The respondents gave different views about feministic atmosphere in the multicultural ESL classroom.

### 4.2 The Position of Females in the ESL Classroom

By this tool of data collection, the teachers gave their point of view regarding the position of females in the classroom discursive practices. Most of the respondents were of the view that in the Pakistani ESL classrooms that the females are considered and treated stereotypically and as the *Other* (Jespersen, 1923; Lakoff, 1975; Said, 1978) or the Out-group (Duszak, 1978; VanDijk, 2001) in the classroom social context. Moreover, they are not provided the equal rights as compared to the men. A teacher was of the view that during lecturing in the class, the teachers have to be very careful in selecting words and avoid certain example and jokes that might be offensive for the female students (C1). Jokes are also cracked which at times demean females while teaching the content of the classes and as per the opinion of the respondents in regard to jokes, one of them said that there are jokes in the class and also that they try to challenge the efficiency and competence of female students by saying 'they learn things by heart and things are like that and they do not have the proper concepts. The teacher further explained that we live in Pakistan and the patriarchal system is in vogue in the country. So we see the same system of positioning in the classroom as well. (C1) This aspect was substantiated by another respondent that 'in order to create humor, we generate and pass

some comment related to genders... if the joke is against women... they (the male students) pass on some comments against women' (C7)

However, the same was emphasized by another respondent that 'I try to endorse the feminist version but generally the patriarchy comes out most of the time' (C6). The atmosphere outside the classroom affects the classroom discourse as reflected by the response of a respondent that "it is a patriarchal society and the same is reflected in the class". (C9) Whereas we also see that women also guard and protect their rights in the class although some of them resist; one of the teachers in this regard said that 'the female students, I mean, they support or favor women as compared to men' C28 and one teacher was also of the view that in the class there is no discrimination or distinction between male and female students. (C15)

#### **4.3 Bias towards Females**

Females as an entity are the counterpart of males; however, it is at times very difficult to maintain the equal position of the both. Not only in the eastern but also in the western societies these discussions have made their room. It has also been observed and noticed that females have been struggling to find their position at par with the males. In the probe regarding the females' role and restrictions in the classroom discourse, the following comments by the respondents have been received:

The males usually try to maintain their position in society and the same is reflected in the classroom discourse among the classroom participants. As one of the respondents said that we live in the male dominant society and it is a patriarchal system and the same is reflected in the classroom and females' role is restrictive (C1) as mentioned by Bem (1993) that females' role remains restrictive due to the gender polarization. The same poles can easily be visible in the classroom discourse among the males and females. One of the respondents substantiated the aspect by saying that boys never accept the social and academic authority or autonomy of females in the class and say that are crammers or rote learners "rattamarnywaliyanhain" (C4) as a result they get good positions in the class. Another respondent very clearly stated that 'you can feel it there is sort of bias towards the female students' (C6). Another very important aspect of classroom discourse was noticed when a teacher said that the word *BETA* (C8) is used for males and females. Now the word *BETA* is an indigenous local word and also used in Urdu language which means to address the male boy (young boy). It clearly reflects that the students are preferred to be known as males rather than females having their own identity. The identity

of females is mixed with the male ones. One more respondent implicitly and indifferently explained the bias towards females by stating that ‘I try to discourage those stereotypical words, I try, I tell them that ‘No’, we should not relate our discussion to patriarchy... whatever (the comments) they do at my back I don't know (C9). During the interview, a teacher narrated a story of a city in the South Asia where “*if you love some girl so you have to kiss her and then you have to run away and you are given two or three days’ time. If the brothers you know of that female, they find that person, right! And they kill him or if it is not I mean if they are unable to find the man they are bound to marry that girl with that gentleman*” (C25). These kinds of views about the females make them simply tools and not the equal partner of males in the society and the classroom. A separate pole has been erected and established for females which does not give them the same equal role rather restricts them.

Another important area of the classroom discursive practices where it was noticed through the interviews that occasionally there is discussion on females’ rights, roles and restrictions (Bem, 1993) as one the respondents accepted that there is some kind of discussion with criticism on females in the ESL classroom. However, ‘I try to pacify the females as they are greater in number and males sit lonely... I mean, criticize the attitude and behavior of females’ (C32). In the same way a respondent while adding to the same asserted that Boys do generate their superiority in the classroom discourse... as I’m a female too so we try to make them (boys) understand that the time has changed now the girls are equal of that of boys but... there are some boys who are from KPK (a province of Pakistan) and they say that no women should be sitting at home ... they have accepted the change. (C33) It clearly reflects that the males do not easily accept the equal position of females and rather try to restrict them in a limited position. The comment of the teacher that being a teacher she also feels restricted and her role remains limited in terms of the patriarchal system that is prevalent in the ESL classroom discursive practices. Her stance about the students of Khyber PakhtoonKhwah (KPK) that is “now they have also accepted the position of females” reflects that there has also been some bias regarding the females’ restrictive role in society and ultimately in the same being reflected in the classroom discourse.

#### **4.4 Females as the Other in the ESL Classroom**

Females are considered as the *Other* in some societies as mentioned previously that Jespersen (1923); Lakoff (1975) and under the rubric

concept of the Other by Said. The concept of Said is basically meant for the ethnicities or those who are not equal to the upper class. However, it is at times, used for females as well to position them at a lower level than males. So in this context, some data was found and it is being analyzed below:

A respondent clearly stating that in the classroom discourse patriarchal mind set dominates (C5). In order to avoid the offence to gender a teacher said that it is clearly announced in the class that there shall be no offence to females in the class (C8). In the same way a respondent said the gender is taken neutral and boys and girls of the class are considered as 'human beings' whereas their comments in the classroom discourse "are mostly culture oriented – patriarchal" (C12). Similarly, to avoid the Othering in the class, a respondent asserted that 'a transgender approach in the class is adopted...' (C16). It is also a problem in the classrooms that there are students from different races and ethnicities and they have their own schemata and background knowledge. The students coming from different rural and remote areas have their own views about the females and they try to implement the same in the classroom discourse considering the females as the Other and not equal to men (C17). One more respondent talking about the polarized Othering states that boys are leveled superior and get more opportunities in the classroom discursive practices and also says 'I believe that that men are from Mars and women are from Venus... we do talk about the real difference of gender in the class...' (C18). A female respondent during the interview continuously used the pronoun *WE* and supported to the idea as the females' rights were still not being granted which ultimately reflects that she was not satisfied with the current status and position of females as she was talking about the females' roles – a female brings up children in the role of mother – in society and the classroom (C19). However, other few supported the patriarchy; for example, 'we follow (in the classroom) the traditions and customs set by our elders' (C21) 'feminism would pop up while teaching literature.... I take it as it is like patriarchal system (C23). There is a soft corner for the females in the classroom discourse by its participants although they do not give equal position to the female students. A respondent argued that while teaching a novel 'Things Fall Apart', I felt that students criticized extremely to the writer who created those scenes where the wives were beaten... (C24). During this polarized Othering, the Islamic perspective is also witnessed where the teachers said that in the classroom discourse partial Islamic environment is visible. Some rights are

given to the males and some rights are taken away from the females (C21) and one more respondent said that certain freedom is given to them (males) and certain freedom not given to us (females) (C26) very different female environment, which is Islamic... like certain freedom given to them (males) certain freedom not given to us... they are still thinking in a very religious gendered type of outlook (C26)

#### **4.5 Equality of the Gender**

Despite the fact that there are certain meticulous discrepancies and percipience in the classroom discourse, there is also some struggle regarding the equality of the two genders in the ESL multicultural classroom. In this regard, a teacher after completing the novel 'The Doll's House' and received an interesting response. The teacher states: a very interesting mixture of reaction by the students. All the boys were against that decision and all the girls were, mostly not all, but mostly the girls were in favor of the decision (03). Similarly, another respondent said that 'I don't make them feel that he is a boy, she is a girl (C4) in order to maintain equality.

One of the teachers was of the view that in order to avoid the patriarchal mindset he/she never used only HE pronoun rather he said "I always say he or she in my discourse". The teacher further said about comments on females in the class that it never happened; however, at the same time the teacher said that "is not quite unlikely we are living in a society which is patriarchal". So the teacher also finally believed that the system we are following is male dominant and we are part of all this (C10). Another teacher evidences, in this regard, that mostly the students try to create a scuffle in proving their dominance like the teacher said "they answer each other" and at another place "we are not supposed to target one gender or any gender" and further the teacher said that the representation of male and female is patriarchal (C11).

One of the teachers was of the view that he/she would avoid talking on matters of males and females in the class. Also it was asserted "I just told you the word Beta I use it for girls and boys equally" (C11). (The word has already been explained previously). Regarding equality in the class, another respondent said that 'try my best to equate them... even if we crack joke against women' (C14). The response of the teacher is really funny that although teachers make fun of the females by cracking jokes on them; however, still they try to pacify and create equality among the



classroom participants. One more respondent clarified the matter by saying that 'I try not to have any kind of discrimination (C15). It can be observed that teachers are also trying to create some sort of equality; however, the prevalent system and traditions and norms do not allow doing anything against them. In this perspective, one respondent emphasized that quite positive attitude of women towards men and men towards women is observed in the classroom discourse (C20). While analyzing the discourse of the classroom a respondent said that the use of pronouns also gives liberty and dominance to the male students whereas we (the teachers) enlighten them there should be no any gender discrimination... (C29). In regard to the equal status of both the genders, a respondent gave an emphatic statement that 'I told them that I am genderless. The teacher explained in *URDU* that every student is given equal chance and they are sensitized that they are equal... (C30). Although, the statement is quite logical in creating the equal opportunities for the students whereas it also reflects that there are serious type of stereotypical discrimination due to which the teachers have to say things like this; as one of the teachers also proclaimed that 'I don't stereotype characters' (C31).

## 5. Conclusion

The study focused on the classroom discourse analysis critically representing the theory as established by Kumaravadivelu (1999) after his visit to an ESL classroom where he found that in addition to the content teaching, some other concepts and social issues are also discussed, which directly influence the students. Primarily, the question of the research study was to find out how the discursive practices and views of teachers portray the position and role of gender in the ESL classroom. Moreover, during the process of classroom interactional discourse, how discursive practices are directed towards such social, religious and ethnic matters, particularly the gender. In order to highlight and identify the presence of such discourses in the ESL classrooms, the current study was conducted.

The gender is biasedly treated in the ESL classrooms and there is a discrimination in dealing with the female students. It is also a fact that teachers try to maintain equality in the classrooms; however, some normative, social and stereotypical preconceived conceptions and notions lead to this inequality in the classrooms. Some embedded cultural and traditional values, perhaps, do not give this freedom to the female students in the ESL venue to exhibit their equal position with their male

counterparts. This discriminatory and stereotypical behaviour in the formal setting also reflects the overall attitude of the society towards females which needs to be considered at a higher level and orientation and sensitization for such matters may be provided at a higher level to the masses. Owing to the subjective views of teachers – both male and female – the male students may also have a dominating attitude towards female students. The universities and other such official structures need to take important steps to train their teachers in order to maintain a specific gender-oriented environment instead of male-oriented milieu.

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