



Gendered Language Use By Teachers And Classroom Communication At Tertiary Level

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Abstract

This paper studies the gender and gendered language use in classroom environment and their effects on communication between the teacher and the students at tertiary level. It also studies whether any gender bias or discrimination enters the classroom environment through either the teacher's or the learners' gender and use of language or their behavior. Apart from that, the other variables such as motivation, language proficiency, level of participation of learners in class, co-education environment, age of the teacher, attitude and behavior of the teacher, and other social and cultural factors etc. are also discussed which can affect the communication between teacher and the learners. For this purpose, a survey has been conducted. A closed ended questionnaire, comprises 18 questions, was designed to analyze the main variables gender and gendered language use along with other aforementioned factors for the selected students studying at tertiary level in a local language university in Islamabad, Pakistan. The questionnaire was distributed among forty students, twenty males and twenty females, to conduct the survey. The findings obtained from quantitative analysis of the responses revealed the students' concept of gender and gendered language use and the issues related to them in classroom environment and their effects on communication between teacher and students. The students' responses were discussed in detail from the theoretical perspective of Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory (1990) and Kabira and Masinjila's Gender Analysis Framework (1997). The findings also revealed that students were in favour of the necessity of healthy and gender neutral educational environment for the maximum learning and smooth communication between the teacher and the students.

Key Words: Genderlect, gendered language use, classroom communication

1. INTRODUCTION

A classroom is a particular place where the learners gather to enhance their learning and gain the knowledge which was earlier obscured to them. This is done under the charge of a grown-up who possesses the role of an educator. The educator and the students are the primary members in this learning environment. As a rule, the instructor is the power in

classroom setting as he/she trains the learners and is the principle knowledge supplier. This power role of the instructor has been challenged lately by different educationalists who have a firm belief in a more balanced and democratic classroom environment. The role of an instructor as a facilitator inside the classroom prompts to a comfortable learning environment which goes to subjective initiation and also decreases the negative feelings among the learners.

Classroom management techniques and prior planning is necessary for smooth teaching process at any level of education. The educator naturally tries to adjust his/ her teaching strategies as indicated by the necessities of both the genders. In this process there might be a danger of showing a few inclinations and preferences via language use or the textual material that is being taught to the learners and the attitude, intentionally or unwittingly, by the instructor and the learners of both genders as well. It is important, therefore, that teachers be properly trained on gender sensitive language use/ attitude in classroom to be neutral resources of knowledge for both genders. (Korir & Laigong, 2014, p.262)

Pakistani society is noted to be divided along gender lines. Gender differences are deeply rooted into the social standards and traditions. Females whether part of a family unit or at work places are observed to be less favored and in reverse contrasted with males (Qureshi & Rarieya, 2007, p.xviii). Males are considered higher in status than females. In classroom setting, the gender and age of the teacher whether male or female may raise some issues of preferences. The learners especially male with such a preconception of social and gender differences find it difficult to accept the power of a female educator. Similarly, a young male educator may attempt to mishandle his power and turn out to be overfriendly towards any specific learner of either opposite sex or both which can eventually turn into a barrier to a perfect classroom environment hence hamper communication.

Apart from the above mentioned emotional and behavioral states the most important factor is the language use that may cause gender discrimination in classroom. Language is a tool used to communicate our thinking and beliefs. Inappropriate use of language can transmit negative messages consequently inhibit learning. Gender differences and inequalities in the classroom can be reinforced via language use if it reflects male dominance and consigns women to an inferior position (Mlama, Dioum, Makoye, Murage, Wagah, & Washika, 2005, p.14). Kabira and Masinjila (1997) have stated in their research that how nouns and pronouns in written and spoken discourse can create bias. Very often “he” is used instead of “he or she” to refer to a person of either sex. For example, teachers often use “he” to refer to students: ‘the student should be encouraged so that he will participate more in class’ (p.18). The use of generics as mentioned by Kabira and Masinjila (1997) to be “gender neutral” but “when bear a clear male or female stamp”, they are not neutral e.g., scientist and his works (Kabira & Masinjila, 1997, p.19). There is also a need to assess whether such gender divisions regarding language use exist in a Pakistani classroom setting or not.

The society plays an essential part in shaping of an individual's personality, thinking and his/ her language use. Tannen (1990) holds that males and females differ in their communicative style as if they belong to two separate cultures. She has compared the misunderstandings between men and women speech with misunderstandings between

speakers of two different languages or dialects. Thus, applying that to classroom settings, students' social background along with their respective genders and linguistic differences have a great impact on classroom communication. There are certain societies which are completely isolated where minimum or no communication between male and female takes place. It may take some time to get adjusted where both male and female are present. The gender and the choice of language used by the instructor may prevent the learner from participating as he/she may feel uncomfortable at being educated by an instructor of the opposite gender.

Society often assigns specific roles to either sex. Language is merely a reflection of different social/gender roles and their expected behavioral outcomes of men and women in a social setting (Trudgill, 1974, p.94). The ladies may be submissive and the males may dominate. There are other stereotypical personality traits of women including when they are often referred to upon their language use or choice of linguistic forms as emotional, foolish, talkative, less confident, more inquisitive, apologetic, mitigate criticism with praise and exchange compliments instead of facing the critique, etc., (Tannen, 1995). In classroom setting such knowledge of preset specific roles along with the language use by both the genders may cause a tension between teacher and students as their ego may not let them be a part of class proceedings and consequently may cause failure of communication. Apart from the previously mentioned social and cultural factors, the individual personality traits including cognitive variables i.e., having high or low level of intelligence, linguistic competency along with competency in performance, individual variation, motivation, and affective factors related to feelings, emotions and attitude of the students, all these factors play important role in maintaining communication between teacher and students of either gender and have a great impact on learning skills of students.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The classroom is a microcosm of the society at large (Battalio, 2005, p.1). Whatever is accepted and considered to be true about gender roles and gendered language use in social context is additionally brought into the lectures of the instructors. The learners retain different ideas from their instructors and the environment around them when they are exposed to gender stereotyping through the language used by the teacher. Discrimination can enter into the classroom communication if the educators' state of mind, behavior, and choice of language towards male and female learners vary. The students may develop an inferiority complex if they find teacher's preference to a specific student of either gender which may lead to less comprehension of the learning material and also lack of development of various language skills. Gender discrimination through the use of gendered language in class can be immediate and evident or it can take more subtle forms. The indirect underrepresentation of females such as in text or the direct abuse of teacher to one gender and gentle behavior to the other can negatively affect the learners particularly the ones who are straightforwardly under the shadow of this discrimination. All these factors may have a direct influence on communication between teacher and students in classroom.

1.2. Objectives of the Research

In a classroom environment it is necessary that the student- teacher communication be opened and free of gendered language use and any other type of gender bias for maximum and positive learning to take place. Teachers can enhance the performance of the students by using encouraging language in the classroom. This study is guided by the following research objectives:

- To assess whether the gender of the educator and learners is an important factor affecting classroom communication.
- To analyse the effects of using gendered language in classroom by either of the male or female teacher or students and its effects on learning.
- To assess the level of participation of students of both the genders in class activities and behaviour of teacher and students and their effects on classroom communication.

2. Gendered Language Use in Classroom

Gender is a socio-cultural concept as compared to sex of a person that is something inherent, god-given and fixed. The gender is absolutely a man-made concept. "Gender roles are determined by the society, they can be changed and vary over time and from community to community" (Mlama et al., 2005, p.1). Leap (2003, p.402) also defines genders as cultural constructions rather than biological functions. In classroom environment, these gender roles, intentionally or unintentionally, carried into by both the instructors and the learners.

Oxford Living Dictionary defines "gendered" as "relating or specific to people of one particular gender". Therefore, gendered language can be defined as language "having or making gender-based distinctions" ("gendered", n.d.). Dasani and Roy (2009) state in their research that an average dictionary contains 220 words for the description of women of ill repute while there are 20 for men. There are 03 male words for every female word (Dasani and Roy, 2009, para. 4). This is how a language can become a gendered language when one associates it with a particular gender. The two genders communicate in various styles as a result language used by female is different from the language used by male. These differences often depend upon vocabulary, syntax, rising-falling tone, conversational style etc., etc. Many well-known linguists such as Robin Lakoff, Robin Tolmach Lakoff, Deborah Tannen, Deborah Cameron have put forward their theories of language and gender based on some approaches such as deficit, dominance, difference and discursive approaches respectively. Tannen (1990) states, "how even in the closest of relationships women and men live in different worlds of different words" (p.1). She takes a sociolinguistic approach to these gender differences since she feels that "because boys and girls grow up in what are essentially different cultures . . . talk between women and men is cross-cultural communication" (Tannen, 1990, p.18).

Mlama et al., (2005) define gender discrimination as giving preferential treatment to individuals and denying their rights on the basis of their gender (p.1). This is often considered a deliberate and conscious act. Whereas gender equality is defined when men, women, girls and boys all have equal opportunities and benefits by eliminating all forms of

discrimination based on gender (Mlama et al., 2005, p.1). The discrimination often starts with using labels for ourselves or others. McConnell-Ginet (2003) explains in her article that, "Social labeling practices offer a window on the construction of gendered identities and social relations in social practices . . . labels characterize and categorize people" (p.69). For instance if you use a word "airhead" for a woman as "She's a total airhead," it means you attribute female brainlessness. It is a negative characterization yet gendered (McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p.69). Gender is defined as a global social category; people learn more about gender when they move in local communities to which they belong and take part in their social rituals (McConnell, 2003, p.71). For Eckert (2003), "Adolescence is a critical site for the study of language and gender. It is a life stage at which tremendous amount of identity work is being done, and gender is perhaps the most salient in this work than at any other life-stage" (p.381). Eckert (2003) also considers "labeling as an important means of producing and maintaining social distinction" (p.388). She identifies labeling as "a powerful means of co-constructing gender and social categorizations, and of controlling social meaning within the community" (Eckert, 2003, p. 388). At secondary and tertiary level of education, students do label each other and sometimes their teachers as well which is often considered as an offensive act on the part of the learners.

In classroom, many teachers are not aware that the language they are using can have negative gender attitudes. The use of different terms and expressions, their tones of voice may give the impression "that the girls are not as intelligent as boys". During teacher training sessions good teacher-student relationships are emphasized but practically most of these relationships are not favorable to effective learning. "Teachers tend to be authoritarian, even hostile, unapproachable and distant" . The students, often girls, find it difficult to seek guidance and assistance from teachers for either academic or personal problems. Even educational "management systems often do not include gender considerations in their design and implementation" (Mlama et al., 2005, p.8). Moreover, "inappropriate language use can transmit negative messages and inhibit learning" (Mlama et al., 2005, p.14). It is for this reason that gender sensitive policies and educational programs be propagated and implemented which can complement the performance of both boys and girls at school. (Barbara & Happy, 2015, p.59).

The above mentioned studies and articles, though a few in number, but address some of the possible factors related to gender, gender specific roles with reference to particular cultures and gendered language use that enter into classroom environment to influence whatever is happening in the class and particularly affect the communication between teacher and the learners and may also affect the leaning skills of the learners as a consequence.

3. Research Method and Design

This research is based on theoretical perspective of Tannen's Genderlect Theory (1990) coupled with Classroom Interaction and ABC of Gender Analysis Framework by Kabira and Masinjila (1997). This study follows the survey method. Following is the detail of all these components:

3.2 Conceptual Framework

Tannen's Genderlect Theory (1990) sees the men and women conversation as cross cultural communication. She states that "instead of different dialects, it has been said they speak different genderlects" (p.18). Tannen (1995) states that men and women speak same language but each gender has its own dialect, linguistic style, choice of lexical items, and preferred topics (p.243). The goal of Genderlect theory is to identify the differences between men's and women's speech and understand such differences in order to prevent miscommunication between both the genders in the workplace, personal life and relationships (Tannen, 1995, p.242).

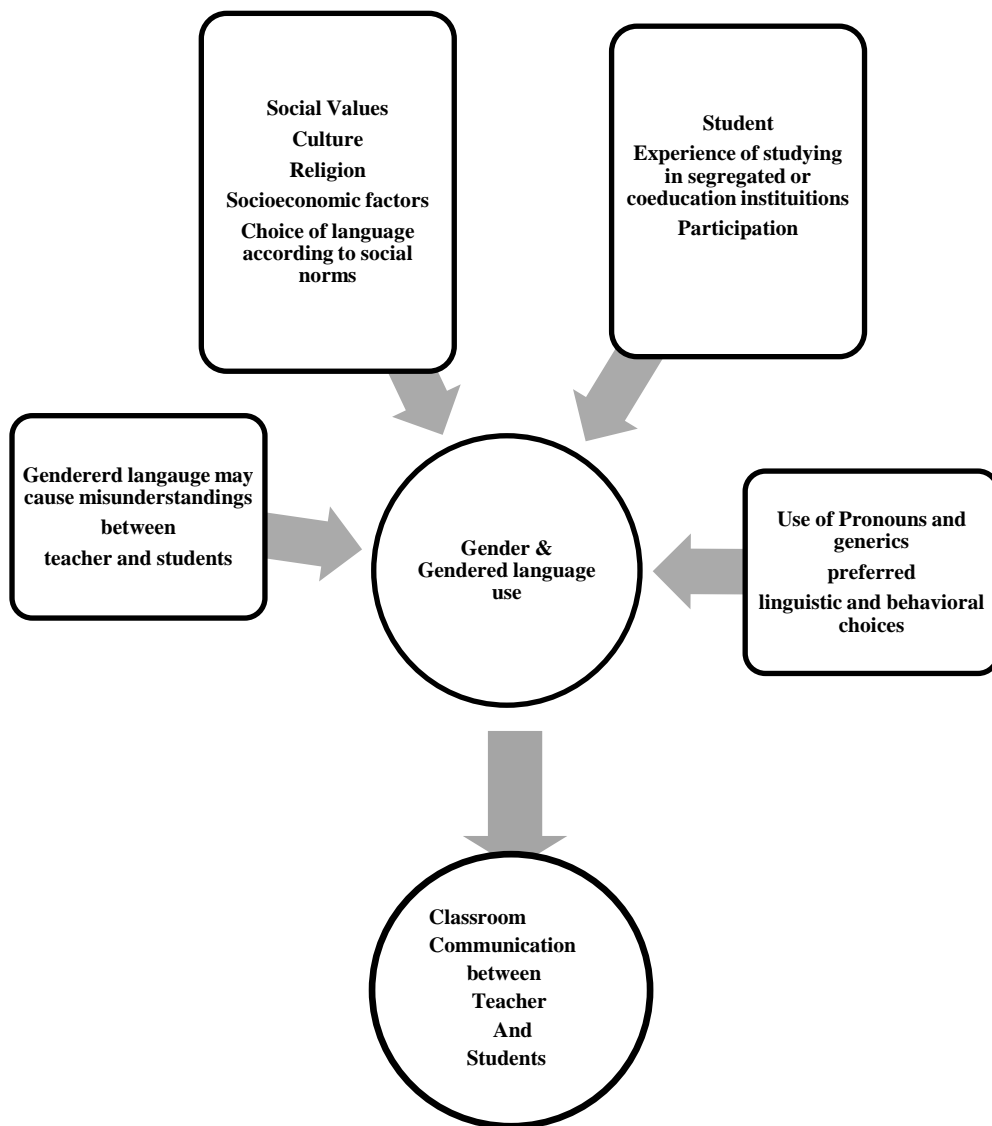
According to Kabira and Masinjila (1997), "language is one of the most important and subtle ways of portraying gender biases through conventions of speaking and writing" (p.17) e.g., the use of nouns and pronouns, generics, vocatives are important to analyze the different speech patterns of male and female conversation. The classroom environment is very important for the equal participation of boys and girls, and its influence on their performance and learning skills. This framework helps in identifying the gender gaps in pupil-teacher interaction within classroom environment. They see the classroom settings and dynamics as very crucial elements from the perspective of teachers for the creation of better learning environment for both male and female learners (Kabira & Masinjila, 1997, p.29). The framework consists of the six components but I have selected only three for the analysis of responses of teachers and students via questionnaires. These are:

- **Participation of the students**
- **Teacher's expectations**
- **Teacher's behavior**

According to Kabira and Masinjila (1997) such an analysis will help the educators to be gender sensitive in their usual communication with learners and this will also contribute to the quality of their performance (Kabira and Masinjila, 1997, p.34).

3.4 Application of Conceptual Framework:

The questionnaire for the students is designed by the researcher by integrating the theoretical perspective of Tannen (1990) and Kabira and Masinjila's (1997) Gender Analysis Framework. Therefore, the responses of the pupils related to gendered language use are assessed by keeping in mind the aspects of Tannen's Genderlect Theory (1990) and the answers related to gender of the students, participation of the students, teacher's expectations and behavior and social values are analyzed in the light of Kabira and Masinjila's framework of Gender Analysis. The following figure encompasses all the key elements at a glance that are covered in questionnaire for the students:



3.5 Research Method and Materials

The data is collected through survey method as the topic selected for this study is much prevalent in the field of education, that is why, survey is conducted to get the responses from the students through questionnaires. This study follows cross-sectional survey design. The researcher collects data at one point in time; it helps in measuring the current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and practices (Cresswell, 2012, p.377).

One structured questionnaire, comprises 18 questions, is used as a research tool. All questions are closed-ended. The format of the closed ended questions is like multiple choice questions.

The population of the research is the students of MA in English Literature and Linguistics currently studying at a local language university. Forty students, 20 males and 20 females are selected as the participants of the study. The homogeneous sampling is done as all the students are studying the same subject at tertiary level in co-education

environment. The questionnaires were distributed among the students to gain knowledge about their opinion.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data is collected through questionnaires. The research is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The percentages of the responses of the learners are presented through bar graphs whereas analysis is done qualitatively by keeping in mind Tannen's Genderlect theory (1990) and Gender Analysis Framework by Kabira and Masinjila (1997) under the heading of 'Discussion'.

4.1 Analysis of the Responses of Students' Questionnaire

Forty students, 20 Males and 20 Females, of MA in English participated and filled in the questionnaires. Below is given the percentages of their responses in graphs followed by an overall detailed discussion on the analysis of all the responses.

1. Is this your first experience being educated by both male and female instructors?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

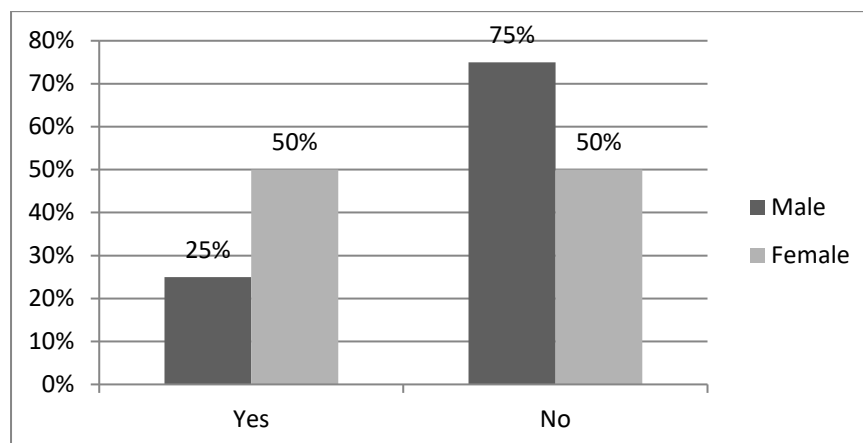


Figure 1

Responses:

75% male students and 50% female students had the prior experience of being educated by both male and female educators where as 50% female learners and 25% male learners responded to be taught by both male and female instructors for the first time. The basic reason for asking this question was to find out the comfort level of the students of both the gender at attending classes by both the male and female teachers. The results show that most of the students find it quite normal to attend the classes being taught by both male and female instructors.

2. Do you prefer being taught by
 - a) Male Teacher
 - b) Female Teacher

c) Both

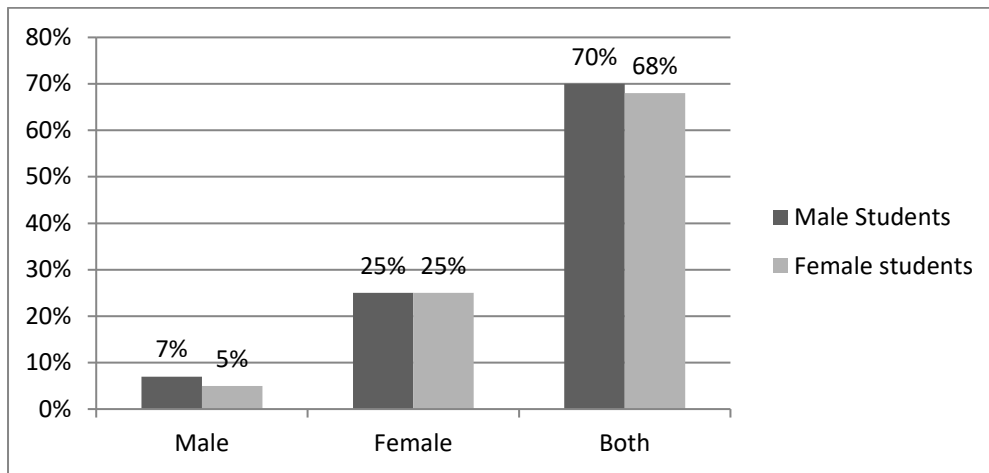


Figure 2

Responses:

Majority students, i.e., 70% males and 68% females responded to be taught by both male and female instructors. The choice for female teacher remained equal i.e., 25% each, by both types of learners. A small average of the students around 7% male and 5% female preferred to be taught by male teacher. This question was also related to the previous question whose basic purpose was to determine the preferences of both male and female teachers and students. Most of the students responded to study regardless of the gender of the teacher.

3. Do you find it easy to talk in the presence of
 - a) Male Teacher
 - b) Female Teacher
 - c) Both

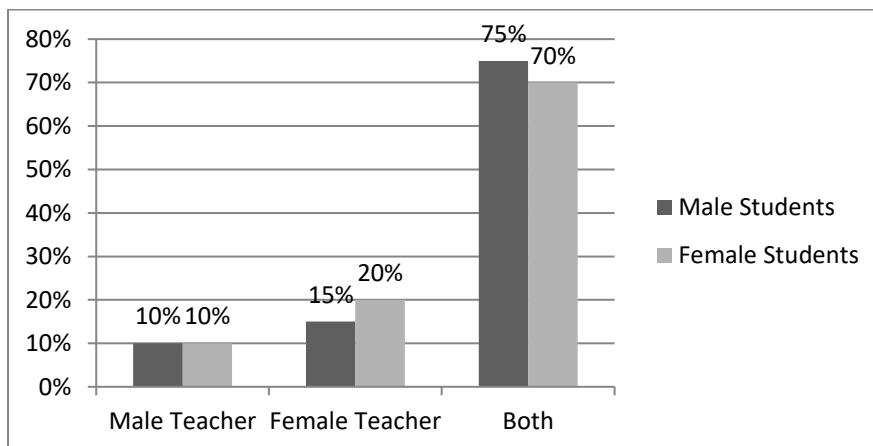


Figure 3

Responses:

A great majority of students, 75% male and 70% female, found it easy to converse with teachers of either gender. Equal percentages of both male and female students i.e., 10% opted for male teachers and up to 20% for female teacher.

- 4. Are you aware of the terms 'gender' and 'gendered language use' in educational environment?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Not sure

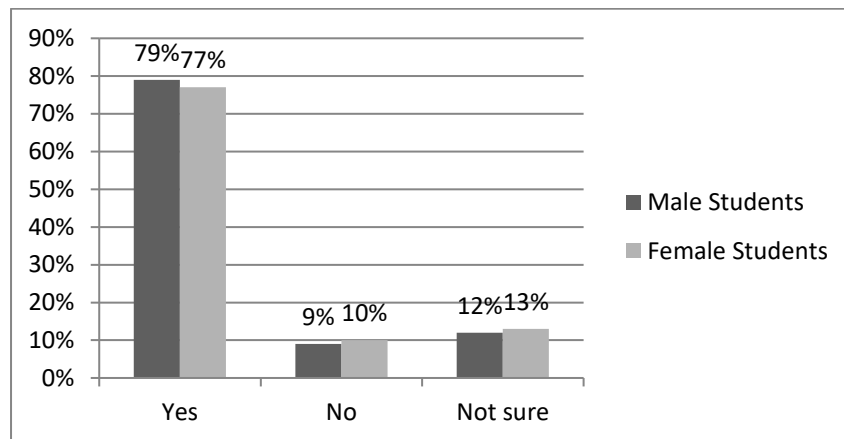


Figure 4

Responses:

A vast majority of students i.e. 80% both male and female responded that they do have knowledge about the terms 'gender' and 'gendered language use' in educational environment. A small percentage of students i.e. 9% males and 10% females did not know where as 12% males and 13% females were not sure.

- 5. Does the teacher either male or female use gendered language in class?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Sometimes
 - d) Very often

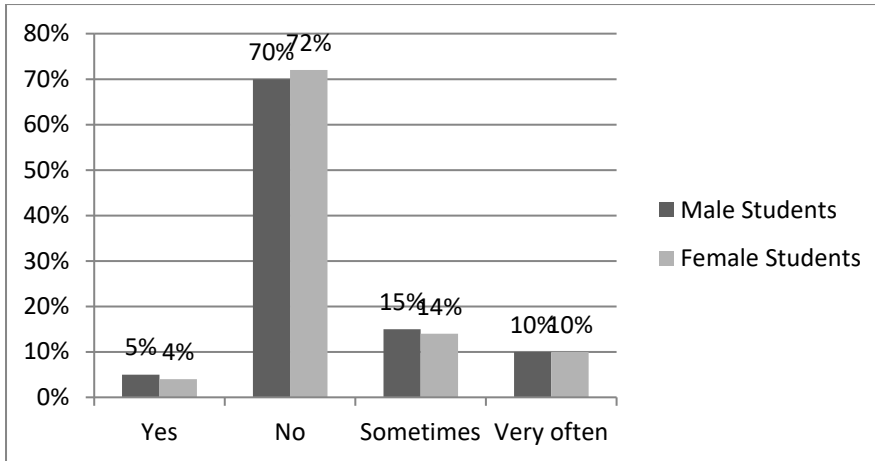


Figure 5

Responses:

Above 70% students of both the gender selected 'No'. A small percentage of the students chose 'Yes'. Almost 15% male and 14% female students selected 'Sometimes' and equal percentages of students both male and female ticked 'Very often'. Overall, majority students reported that teachers do not use gendered language in class.

6. Which of these pronouns are preferred to be used by either men or women?

- a) I
- b) We

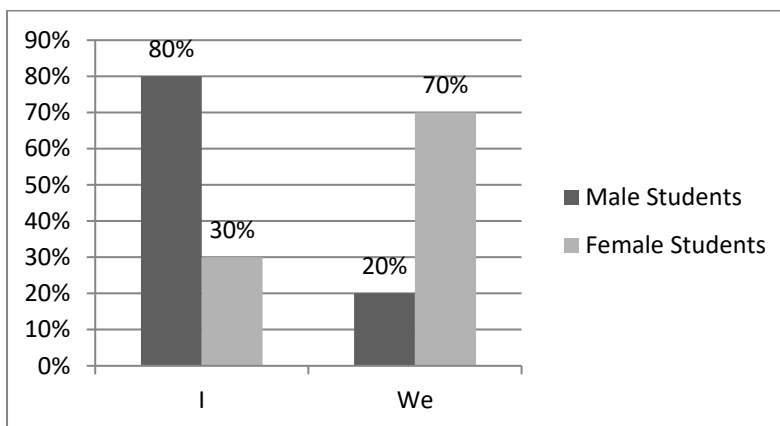


Figure 6

Responses:

Almost 80% male students responded that men preferably use 'I' as compared to 'We' which was selected by only 20% male students. 70% female students chose 'We' as used by women as compared to 'I' which was selected by only 30% female students.

7. Who do you think are more advice seeker?

- a) Male
- b) Female

c) Both

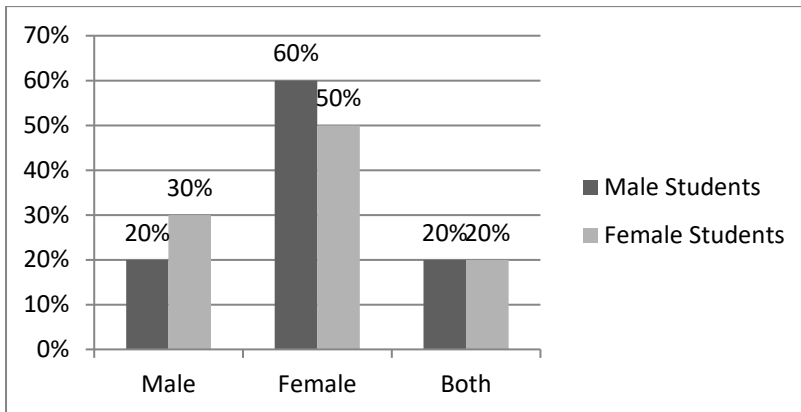


Figure 7

Responses:

In response to this question majority students, 60% males and 50% females, nominated females as more advice seeker as compared to men. 20% male and female responded that both male and female are advice seeker whereas 20% male and 30% female students ticked 'Male'.

8. Who asks more questions in class?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Both

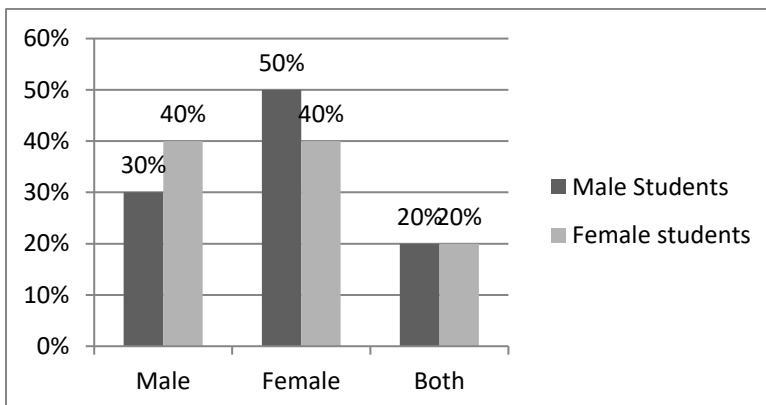


Figure 8

Responses:

Majority students, 50% male and 40% female, responded that females ask more questions in class. 40% female students thought that males ask more questions whereas 30% male students thought that females ask more questions. Equal percentages of male and female students showed that both males and females ask more questions.

9. Who volunteers to answer questions more in class?

- a) Male

- b) Female
- c) Both

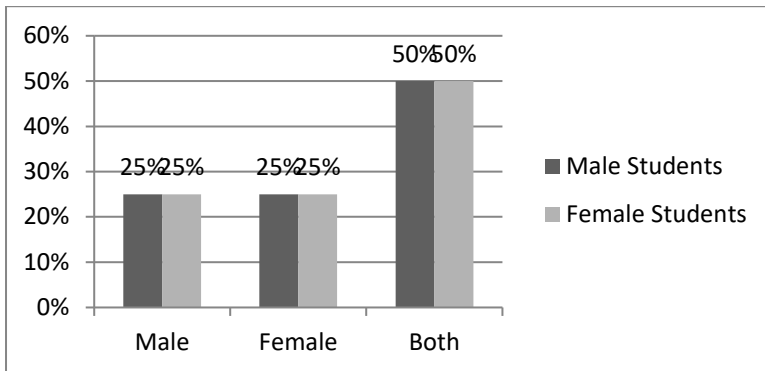


Figure 9

Responses:

Equal ratio with 50% each students, male and female, responded that both genders volunteered to answer more in class. Similarly equal ratio i.e., 25% each, can be seen from the responses of the students of both the gender that female volunteered to participate more and vice versa.

10. Who takes part in class discussions more?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Both

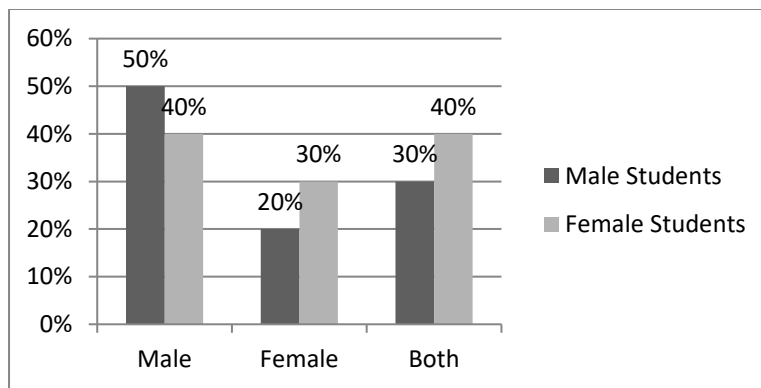


Figure 10

Responses:

Half of the male students i.e., 50% responded that male students take part more in class discussions as compared to female students who with 40% responded in favour of male. 20% male and 30% female ticked 'Female' where as 30% male and 40% female students replied for 'Both'. The responses showed a mixture of opinion for both male and female students taking part in class discussion.

11. Whom does the teacher ask more questions and compliment as well?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Both

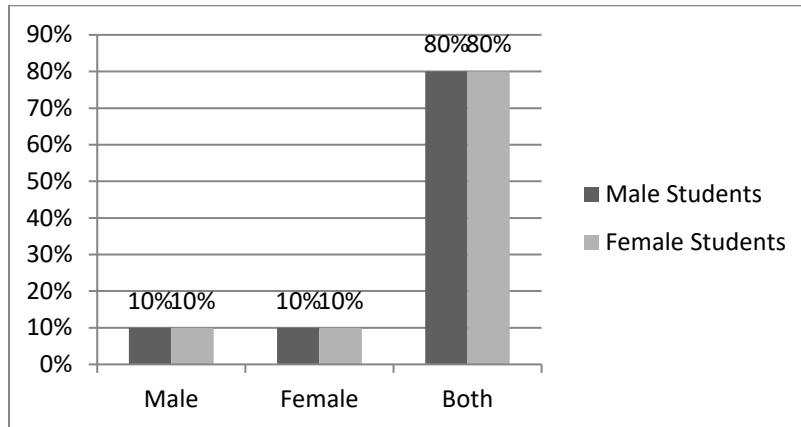


Figure 11

Responses:

The students (80%) of both the gender responded that the teacher asks questions and compliments equally to both male and female students. A small but equal ratio with 10% responses of both types of students showed that the teacher asks questions and compliment both male and female students.

12. Do you think that the presence of class fellows of the opposite gender a hindrance in classroom communication?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe

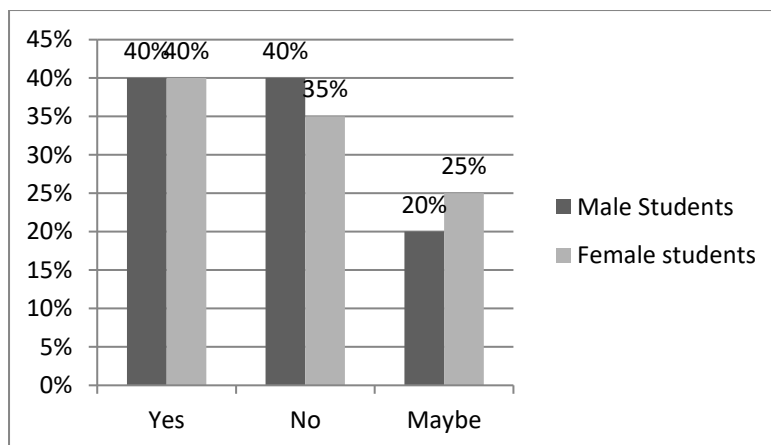


Figure 12

Responses:

It is seen that both male and female students with equal percentages i.e., 40% each responded for 'Yes'. 40% male and 35% female students chose 'No' where as 20% male

students and 25% female students selected 'Maybe'. The results show that half of the students do not feel any hindrance in the presence of the opposite gender whereas the other half thinks that they do feel hesitation in the presence of the opposite gender.

13. Which of these factors strongly affect the communication between students and teacher?

- a) Culture
- b) Religion
- c) Socio-economic factors
- d) Choice of language

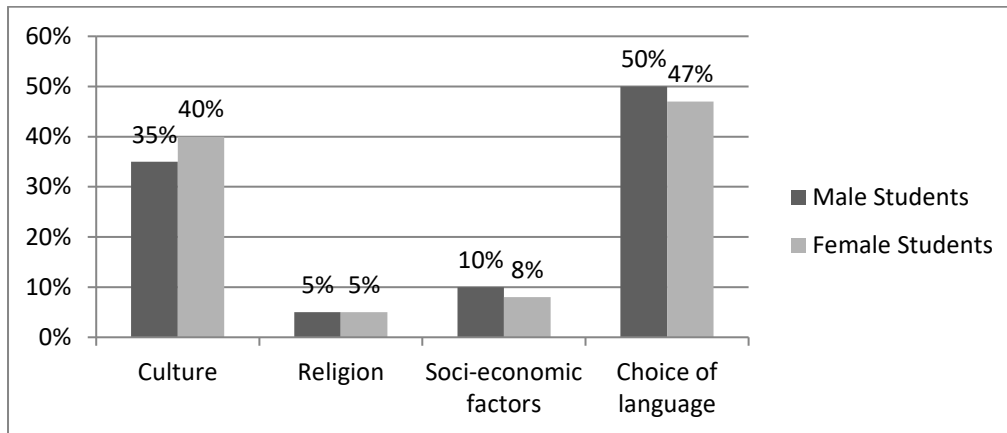


Figure 13

Responses:

It can be seen that the top most factors out of all these was 'Choice of language' with 50% responses of male and 47% responses of female students that affects the communication between teacher and students. The second most important factor was 'Culture' selected by 35% male and 40% female students. 'Religion' and 'Socio-economic factors' were selected by both male and female students, up to 5% and 10% and below respectively.

14. Do you think that teachers give more importance to the students of one specific gender i.e. either male or female?

- a) Never
- b) Often
- c) Sometimes

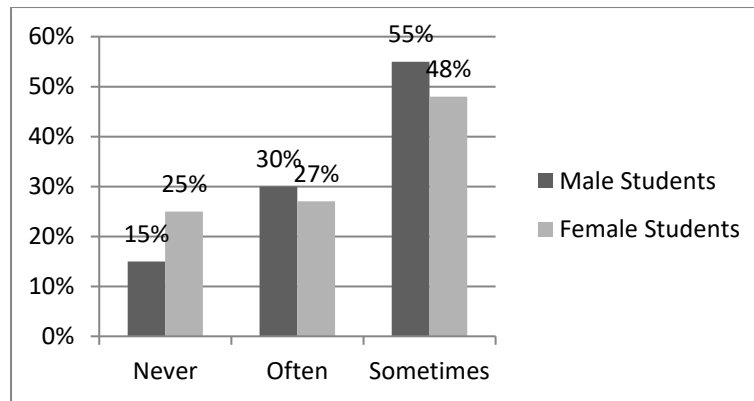


Figure 14

Responses:

Majority of the students i.e. 55% males and 48% females responded that teachers sometimes do give more importance to the students of one specific gender. 30% male and 27% females reported that this happens often where as 15% male and 25% females thought it never happened.

15. Have you ever faced a biased attitude from teacher of male or female gender?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Both

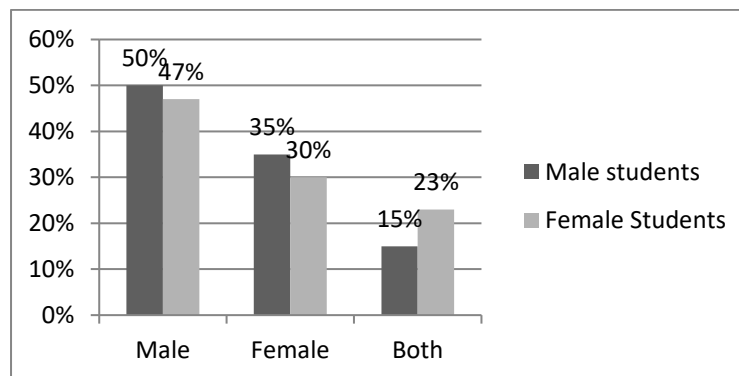


Figure 15

Responses:

Most of the students, 50% male and 47% females, responded that they faced biased attitude from male teachers where as 33% male and 30% females thought that they faced a biased attitude from female teachers. 15% male and 23% female responded to face biased attitude from teachers of both the genders.

16. Do you think that the lectures delivered by the teachers are free of gender discrimination and gendered language use?

- a) Yes

- b) No
- c) Maybe

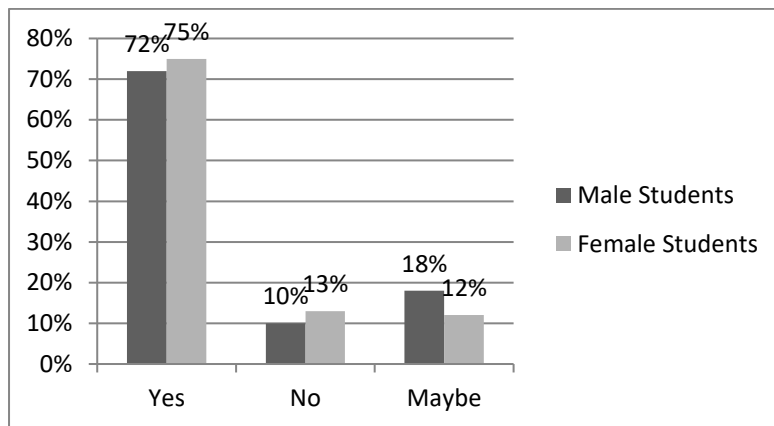


Figure 16

Responses:

A great majority of students, 72% male and 75% females, thought that the teachers do try to deliver their lectures free of gender bias and gendered language use where as a small number of students i.e. 10% male and 13% females responded that there is gender bias and gendered language use by the teacher and the remaining students i.e. 18% males and 12% females were not sure whether bias or use of gendered language is there or not.

17. Do you think gendered language use can cause misunderstandings between the teacher and students?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not Sure

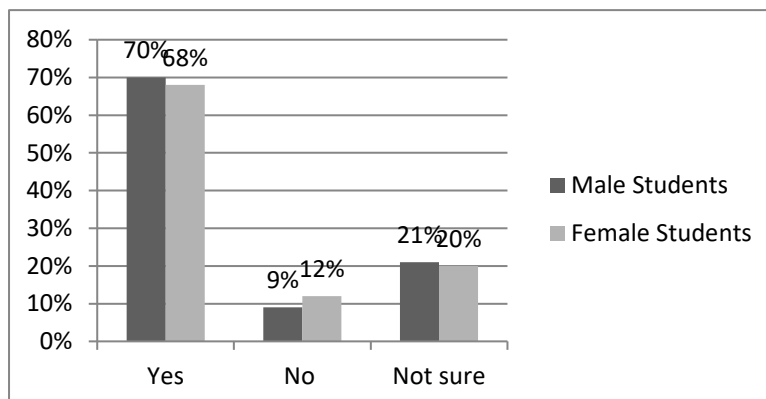


Figure 17

Responses:

A great majority of students i.e. 70% males and 68% females thought that gendered language use can cause misunderstandings between teachers and students. 21% males and

20% females were not sure whether misunderstanding between teachers and students can be caused by the use of gendered language. A very small percentage of students of both the gender did not think so.

18. Do you think awareness of linguistic differences between men and women speech can have a positive impact on communication between teacher and student?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not sure

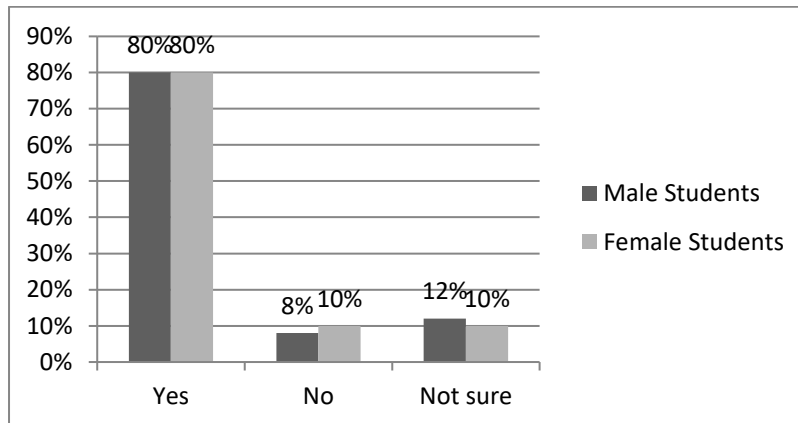


Figure 18

Responses:

Almost 80% students of both the gender responded that awareness of linguistic differences between men and women speech can have a positive impact on communication between teacher and students. Very few students with 8% male and 10% female responded negative for this question and 12% male and 10% females were not sure about this.

4.2 Discussion on the Responses

The focus of this study was to find out the use of gendered language in classroom and its effects on the communication between teacher and students at tertiary level. It has been found through the responses of both the male and female students that most of them are aware of the terms 'gender' and 'gendered language use' in educational environment. Some of the female students responded to be educated by both male and female teachers first time but they showed their preferences for the teachers of both the genders. They do not feel hesitation while speaking in front of both male and female teachers. As far as the presence of the class fellows of opposite gender is concerned, half of the students thought they do not feel hesitant and the other half responded the opposite of it. Following is given the support of theoretical and conceptual frameworks to the responses of the students gathered through the questionnaires.

Gender is a "socio-cultural classification of women and men" (Mlama et al., 2005, p.1). According to a web resource designed for use by educators, entitled as Gender and Education – Mythbusters(2009), "ethnicity or social class has a greater impact on an

educational achievement than gender considered on its own" (p.3). Therefore, understanding the meaning and nature of gender and related concept and social construction of gender in society is very important for both the teachers and students in classroom setting. The awareness regarding gender as a "social construct" (Mlama et al., 2005, p.3) can bring a mark difference not only in teacher's teaching but also in the lives of the students.

The students responded that most of the teachers tried to make their class lectures free of gender discrimination while choosing the text or teaching materials. According to Kabira and Masinjila (1997), written material is permanent and may contain gender disparities so the best strategy is to sensitize the users on such biases. In classroom setting, the teachers must be aware of such disparities and be critical to them at each step. Since the written material cannot be changed, a gender responsive approach must be mandatory to all the teachers. This awareness regarding disparities is necessary to know by all the teachers because in the long run they do have negative implications on the growth and lives of the learners (p.27).

Regarding the responses for the choice of pronoun between I and we, most of the male students responded that they use 'I' where as a great majority of female respondents opted for 'We'. Tannen (1995) observes the different effects of using "I" in situation where she heard women say "we". Men often use "I" as if they own the whole world or in a workplace they own the whole company or organization etc. "They claim the credit in an obvious way by saying that, "I did this." She recorded women saying "we" when referring to work they alone had done" (Tannen, 1995, p.246). The performance of most of the women is difficult to evaluate while working in a team if they are shy to own their ideas and consequently at a risk to never get credit for their contributions or efforts. For Tannen, such linguistic differences can put women at a disadvantage in the workplace. She states that awareness of such differences can lead to positive changes (Tannen, 1995). Applying this to classroom setting, it is also difficult for the teacher to evaluate the performance of the students of either of the gender particularly in group activities. The credit may be associated to the person who is most vocal about reporting the results. The knowledge of such minor linguistic differences helps in reducing the possibility of misunderstanding between teachers and students.

Most of the male and female students' responses proved that females tend to seek more advice than males in classroom. According to Tannen (1990), women want sympathy whereas men understand the situation and find a solution for any problem. The problem lies in different approach and linguistic choices. Most often women are interested in getting emotional support instead of solutions. In classroom, female students often want sympathy both verbally and morally in different situations, especially if they do not perform well in some task assigned by the teacher; instead of finding a solution they want others' sympathies which sometimes create misunderstanding between teacher and students or peer-peer interaction. Gaining sympathy may give the impression to the teacher that students are not strong enough to take the responsibilities of their studies and prefer to rely upon others either in finding the solutions to the problems they face in class or in their studies or just moral and verbal support.

Some of the questions were related to students' participation in terms of asking questions, taking part in class discussions, teacher's behavior and expectations. Half of the male students responded that male students take part in class discussions more than the female students while 40% females responded in favor of both. Majority of the Students, both male and female, thought that teachers pose questions and complement equally to the students of both the genders. When it comes to asking questions on the part of the students 50% male students responded that female students ask more questions where as some students nominated both. Tannen (1995) states, "In a group, if only one person asks questions, he or she risks being seen as the only ignorant one" (p.248). According to Tannen's observations, boys are more likely to be aware of the underlying power dynamic by which ones who asks question can be seen in a one-down position. The reason depends on the way the boys are socialized. Boys are "more attuned than women to the potential face-losing aspect of asking questions" (Tannen, 1995, p.248).

Both male and female students voluntarily answer questions in class; this was the response of most of the students. They also responded that sometimes teachers do pay attention to students of one gender i.e., either male or female. Both male and female students answered to face bias by male teachers. Kabira and Masinjila (1997) stated in their gender analysis framework that the teacher should be aware of the different needs of both male and female learners. Female students often do not reply soon as compared to the male students. The answer is not the reason; they do not take the risk of being wrong because of their socialization. The teachers should be aware of such gender differences. According to Kabira and Masinjila (1997), the expectations of the students and the attitudes of the teachers influence the participation of both male and female students. The learners try to fulfill the expectations of teachers. Teachers' rewards and punishments do make a difference in the performance of the students (p.31). Moreover, there can be disastrous results of teachers' expectations of boys on the basis of gender stereotypes where a male student is often expected to perform better because he is male. It may develop a superiority complex among them. Therefore, it is essential for the teachers to take care of the various needs of both the genders (Kabira&Masinjila, 1997, p.32). As far as bias by male teachers is concerned as responded by the students, in Pakistani scenario it can be seen as a usual behavior. Pakistani society is patriarchal in nature and the power is associated with male gender. That is why, majority students replied to face bias from male teachers.

The responses regarding culture and choice of language were marked as top reasons by both teachers and students for influencing the class interaction. Most of the students were sure that the teachers try to make their class lectures free of gender bias and gendered language use. Most of them responded positively that gendered language use can cause misunderstandings between the teacher and students whereas awareness of linguistic differences between men and women speech can have a positive impact on communication between teacher and students. According to Kabira and Masinjila (1997), "Teachers are the role models for the students. The attitude, biases and stereotyped behavior of teachers can pass on to the students of both the gender and can also contribute to the perpetuation of the stereotypes" (p.33). Teacher must have an awareness of how the communication in classroom can affect the performance of the male and female students in a positive or negative way. For that purpose, they should be able to identify the gender gaps in all the areas and try to make conscious decisions on how to deal with such gaps in the respected

areas. Teachers should encourage gender responsive relationships in class (Kabira&Masinjila, 1997, p.34). For Tannen (1995), “using language is a learned social behavior. Communication isn’t as simple as saying what you mean. How you say, what you mean is crucial, and differs from one person to the next” (Tannen. 1995, p.243). The way we speak and converse is deeply affected by cultural experience and is not as natural as we think. We can face problems if we interpret and evaluate others according to our own perceptions. Having the knowledge of differing linguistic styles can minimize the danger of misunderstandings between men and women (Tannen, 1995, p.243).

To sum up, the responses of the students proved that they are in favor of gender bias free class rooms. Teachers should enhance the motivation level of students and should not allow the students of either gender monopolize the conversation or class discussions. Teachers should not favor unnecessarily one specific student. They should have clear understanding of gender and gendered language use. They should avoid imposing gender specific roles and using gendered language in class. Teachers should treat all the students equally in order to avoid misunderstandings. The more the teachers encourage and motivate the learners to express themselves and communicate in class, the better the students will perform.

5.CONCLUSION

A class consists of a diverse set of people. The instructor is the authority who should be totally fair while dealing with all the students. The teacher and the classroom environment are the most important factors in identifying gender gaps. The careful planning within a healthy learning environment can help the teachers in bridging the gaps to ensure quality education for both the male and female learners(Kabira&Masinjila, 1997, p.29). Many teachers unknowingly utilize the learning materials that delineate gender specific roles or they may comment by using gendered language about the capacity or qualities of the students of either of the gender. This hinders the students, especially the females, from participating effectively in teaching and learning process. The educators and classroom proceedings play important roles in determining how better male and female students participate in education. The educators are the key to teaching and learning processes. Gender responsive educators comprehend and react to the particular needs of male and female learners in the instructing and learning processes (Mlma et al., 2005, p.v).

In order to achieve such goals teachers should be aware of the needs and gender attitudes of both male and female students. Both genders ought to be depicted in non-traditional roles in classroom. Gender specific roles should be avoided. Language used by the teachers ought to be gender sensitive and unbiased. Teachers’ attitudes, behavior and expectations should be encouraging and motivating, so that maximum learning can take place on the part of the students. The course material utilized ought to be free of any bias or discrimination and should represent both the genders positively. Gender and gendered language use in the classroom is a dubious theme that is critical to the communication between teacher and students and consequently critical to the quality of education that can only be achieved with the deeper insights into the gender responsive pedagogy and development of classroom practices that are gender sensitive.

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