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Gender Perception in Multi-cultural Classroom Discourse

Abstract

Societies shape people in and outwards look with different connotations such as gender, attitude and behavior. Humans are the product of society, and each society is different in terms of the environment created by the dwellers. There are societal taboos that are common and similar in most societies of the world, but such cultural affinities are due to the geographical association and the impact of globalization. Common norm, which is practiced in one society is not acceptable in other society, whether it is within a country or in another country. For example, house chores and taking responsibility for the care of the husband is appreciated in Libya, but the same practice is not considered a stereotype in turkey. Women craze for ornaments in South Africa, similar to the customs in Libya and turkey. The discourse of the participants reveals a cultural perception that varies from person to person and culture to culture. Thoughts and behavior are made by society, and the same thoughts are changed with a wave of time.

Key Words: Multicultural, Discourse, Gender, Society, Behavior, Respondent

Introduction

Wienclaw R. (2015), "Gender is culturally defined patterns of expected attitudes and behavior that are considered appropriate for one gender but not the other." (P. 2). However, it is important to differentiate between sex and gender. So according to [Burn \(1996\)](#), "In the most context, psychologist prefer the word 'gender' because it includes the idea that many differences between men and women are culturally created while the word 'sex' implies that the difference is caused directly by biological sex." (P. 19). So, sex represents only one entity while gender represents not only biological trait as well as a socio-economic association as well. However, [Wharton, \(2005\)](#) says "there is no firm consensus on the appropriate use of these two terms among gender scholars. Some reject the term 'sex' altogether and refer only to 'gender.' Others use the terms almost interchangeably". (P., 18). The ambiguity created from the very core issue of knowing the connotation of male or female. Where one section of the society believes that gender is socially renovated, which has got nothing to do with physiology.

Biologist and sociologist agreed upon one point that both schools of thought talk about human behavior, and both talked about the general phenomena of human behaviour and nature. So, it's the societies that have made the segregation between male and female where the male is assigned different tasks in every society, and the female is vice versa. A male child is never appreciated by the parents playing with a doll, and a female child is often discouraged from playing with such toys which are made for boys. In certain societies, the outfits of the female are different; likewise, it would be strongly discouraged if a male has used female's attire. Therefore, science is not concerned with such orthodoxies. Rather it deals with the true nature of humans whereas, a sociologist also gives a deaf ear to societal taboos, which are actually concerned with the changes in the human society without making any change.

Culture is a way of life of the people of specific region which varies from region to region. So, culture has defined certain parameters for male and female, to live, wear and act accordingly; otherwise, nature has made it easy to distinguish. Society has assigned certain rules for each gender like a woman has to dress and act in a different way than a man. In the typical society, a man carries a leading role in the family, and his job is to earn a livelihood for the family where a woman is bound to live inside the house while taking care of the rest of the family while sorting out house chores. In

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1960 the western culture, the man was only authorized to do the white color job, and women had the option except to do a mediocre job.

Therefore, they set street demonstration for their rights with the slogan that they can do anything which a man can. Since then, the perception of gender difference is changed in the west and other developed countries. However, every country carries its unique way of living and tradition that mould that shape up thinking its people. The social environment of each country has embedded a certain set of belief in the mind of the people where they live accordingly. So, wherever they go, they carry their own culture and set of believes that is visible when it comes to a common discussion. Similar, this paper is based on the similar on multicultural discussion of different genders that occurred in ELT classroom at Green University, Turkey. The class is comprised of PhD and Master Students who belong to different countries of the world. The discussion of the students in class turned into a serious discourse where each student came with views that were different from the other. Therefore, in the light of the above discussion, this paper is meant to analyze the gender differences in multicultural classroom discourse and how these different genders of different culture respond in a natural setting of classroom discussion. In addition, the study will also decipher the differences of opinion by each gender.

Literature Review

Behavior is representative of one's attitude and approach towards life. [Gokhale, A Hemp, C, woeste, L & Machina, K, \(2015\)](#), "attitude is an important concept that is often used to understand and predict people's reaction to an object or change and how behavior can be influenced." (P. 510). Each reaction on the part of the gender reflects and people observer accordingly that shows the importance of attitude and behavior in certain occasion. So, it depends on the given environment how it shapes the minds, believes and attitude of the people.

Culturalism

According to [Jain \(1954\)](#), "An attitude is a mental and neutral state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situation with which it is related." (P., 810). However, attitude and believes are the outcomes of one's experience in the given environment, which is called culture. Stjernfelt says (2012), "Culturalism according to which individuals are thoroughly determined by their culture and may only lead a satisfying life within the confines of that culture." (P. 49). Stjernfelt (2012) "culture which provides to its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres." (P. 50). [Guiso et al., \(2015\)](#) culture is defined as a "set of norms and beliefs that guide the behavior of the members of a social group and that are transmitted fairly unchanged from generation to generation" (P. 597).

Multi-culturalism

After flourishing in the specific environment, a person becomes part and parcel of the very culture and become representative of his/her culture in the world. Culture is sought from a broader perspective as multiculturalism. According to [Ahn \(a\) \(2012\)](#), "Multiculturalism is one type of 'politics of recognition' in that it recognizes and accepts the differences of minorities that used to be ignored by 'normal' citizens such as white, male, western, middle class, and/or straight." (P. 98). In other words, [Reidel \(2015\)](#) says, "Multi-culturalism is an approach to governing ethnocultural diversity that dictates that states not only tolerate ethnocultural diversity but also must actively protect equality." (P. 317)

In addition to that, the participants of different gender and countries took part in the discourse in MA class of ELT department were differences of opinion came to the surface on certain issues that have made a ground for micro-discourse analysis. The reflection on the topic shows the set of belief and attitudes of different genders' view and culture.

Best looks

According to [Laver \(2000\)](#) “clothes are never a frivolity: they always mean something, since they are nothing less than the furniture of the mind made visible.” (P. 809). Appearances are always a matter of attraction and joyous activity for all men or women of all ages. It is human nature to look beautiful and attractive; therefore; maximum efforts are always made on outward beauty and appearance. However, people also judge others on the basis of appearance first so, in this regard, Wild says, (1992), “it is only shallow people who do not judge by appearance. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.” (P. 21). In addition, it is also commonly observed that women are more prone to make-over than men. As Respondent4 who is from Kenya, says (EXTRACT 6 line 2) that it’s in the nature of a woman who always tries to look better which means that every woman is interested in outward decoration to beautify her. Respondent2, who belongs to Turkish Cyprus, endorses the opinion (EXTRACT 6, line 7) of Respondent4 that it is in the ‘genes’ of the women that means that every woman is interested in glamour. Respondent4 further elaborates his points that (EXTRACT 6 line 8) while giving his own examples that he does not bother to look at his hairs and other stuff before leaving home, but this is really a matter of concern for women, and she takes a lot of time in getting ready before leaving home. Respondent1, who is from Libya, also agrees with the view (EXTRACT 9) of Respondent4 and other male member while giving an example of her female students from Libya that female students do prefer to their look more than the male students. In a nutshell, we can conclude that women are more conscious than men in terms of appearances but we cannot deny the fact that men do give importance to look better but not to that extend the way women do.

Motherhood

According to Rieker (2014), “Infants’ behaviors are biologically programmed to ensure attachment to a primary caretaker, and attachment is an optimal strategy for survival.” Motherhood is a unique relationship between a child and mother, which is unparalleled to the rest of the relations. The love of a mother is described in some way or the other in a different situation. Similarly, in the dialogue, a mother also shows her love towards the kids in the way of capturing moments of her child. While interpreting the dialogue from extract, Respondent3 says (EXTRACT 5, line 4) that it is the desire of the mother to capture each moment of her child. Because the child grows rapidly and if the moments are not captured through the eyes of a camera, then they are gone will never come back. Child’s every moment is very important to her mother which shows the uniqueness of motherhood that is beyond the cultural and regional boundaries.

Research Questions

- a. How is gender perception raised, discussed and analyzed in a multicultural discourse analysis session?
- b. Is there any role of culture in shaping opinion?

Research Objective

The objective of this research is meant to analyze gender perceptions in a multicultural setting. Furthermore, it will also look into culture, whether it is responsible for shaping opinions.

Data Selection

Data were selected from the students of Master and PhD of Green University, Turkey. They belonged to different countries of the world with each different culture which had made it possible to collect data assembled in university for the purpose of studies.

Data Collection

The data presented in this article is extracted from the micro-discourse analysis session, which was part of the micro-discourse analysis session. In the aforementioned course’s (MDA) session, each topic of the student is analyzed and discussed. Likewise, the natural speech was collected, which was

about 'taking a photo.' The audio recorder was kept among the participants, who were thirteen in numbers and the session lasted for 48 minutes. In the next session the same data was presented before the participants for MDA where they listened to their own voices and interpreted each point from the recording.

Data Analysis

The micro-discourse analysis method is used to analyze the dialogue; however, the qualitative method is also used in the form of an interview in order to clarify the respective culture and tradition of the individuals. The data presented to analyze in audio recorded form and hard copies of the same recording were also distributed among the participants. The participating students belong to different parts of the world. Therefore, the conversation is created from a multicultural point of view. So, on the basis of observation of the participants, the data is analyzed. The chunks of the recording relevant to the topic are also presented in the extracted form and each extract is analyzed according to the framework of MDA methods. The participants gave an analysis on the topic according to their perspectives which were noted down, which assisted a lot in the interpretation of data.

Ethical Consideration

While keeping in mind the primary ethics of research, I asked the participant for their consent to record the session, which was responded positively. In addition, the participants' and institution identities were kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.

Research Method

In order to answer the questions, I have used the techniques of micro-discourse analysis. The data is analyzed on the basis of participants' observation that took place during the discourse analysis session. Actually, the discourse was about TAKING PHOTO and its importance from different perspectives, which is presented by one of the students. The dialogue encircles around taking a photo where some are talking about persevering moments, and some are more interested in capturing the best looks. Discourse emerged among the participants according to their own perspective. Basically, the participants belong to different cultures and countries; therefore, their point of view on certain points were similar but in all aspects. For instances, Respondent4 (PhD student from Kenya) says females are more interested in taking photos than male. He further extends his discourse that females give more importance to their outward look than male. Respondent2 is a master student belongs to Turkish Cyprus, have the same similar thought as Respondent4 have. Respondent1 (master student from Libya) contradicts certain points with the view that females are not only interested in taking photos but also taking care of the entire family and house chores. Respondent3 (vice-chairman of ELT department at Green university belong to Turkish Cyprus) contradicted the point of Respondent4 when he said that ornamental habit is biological in women. So, all the discourse revolves around the same discussion where every participant gives their own point of view according to the cultural and regional perspective.

Limitation of the Study

No other mode of discourse analysis is part of the study except MDA.

Discussion

Multicultural means multi-thinking when they are gathered at one platform, which can trigger differences of opinion, analysis and discussion. Discourse is often raised in such gathering when things are common to all, and people are familiar with them. The same discourse is raised in micro-discourse analysis classroom where students of a different culture, social background and countries assembled for the same purpose. In certain situation, when the culture is common in all societies, and the participants are familiar with, then discourse automatically raised and analyzed from a different perspective. Similarly, a discourse is raised in the MDA classroom on the topic of 'TAKING PHOTO',

which has raised so many other cultural taboos. The discussion goes beyond the mentioned topic, which is obvious from the extracts given below. Now, the entire discussion is presented in chunks of form with detail analysis.

Extract 1

1. Respondent3: there is also the issue of what they are taking the photo of, I think, because the
2. whole discussion started with(hh) (0.2) fascinating being fascinating with the moment
3. or whatever they are watching but when they are taking: about a lot of photos of
4. something: I think they are talking about the photos of themselves like she says like I
5. we take ten, five, ten (hh) (0.2) because we want to look better or more beautiful this
6. seems to be the issue of gender may [be because]

Text Analysis

The discourse begins with the observation of a data presented by Kaleen (master student belong to Turkish Cyprus). He presented the data to analyze in audio recorded form also distributed each copy of the recording to the participants. Discourse starts with Respondent3 (Turkish Cypriot), in which she observed that they are keenly interested in taking photos (line 1-6); therefore, time, and again they talking about photos and emphasizing to take more photos in order to look better. While taking part in the discussion Respondent3 interprets that connecting photography with the nature of female rather she throws light on the human nature in general. Everyone wants to look better and tries hard to enhance one's beauty with the outward ornaments. the Same is the case of taking photo as they take more photos in order to choose the best one. Mobile phones facilitated humans with the option of taking more photos in one time therefore, one takes the opportunity of many options of taking photo and select the best option.

Extract 2

1. Respondent2: [ya]
2. Respondent3: Woman want to look better in features and that is related to probably the
3. memories and remembering when they look at the pictures, they want to look good
4. when they get old (0.2) yea::↑
5. So: that might be an issue.
6. Is there something you want to tell us ?? (@@@)
7. Respondent2: no I just want anything I will do..(@@@)
8. Sunny: He is laughing I think he takes more photos too... (@@@)
9. Respondent2: that's true I think I mean I know that's why I observed like women tend to use
10. more photos more of themselves I don't see guys take themselves what they tend to
11. take photos more of themselves I don't see guys take selfies. They do as much as

Her analysis is endorsed by Respondent2 (master student who is Turkish Cypriot) with the supporting argument that yes, you are right that means that he is also agreed what she said. Respondent3 takes her analysis further with the view that women always try to look better and beautiful then they want to capture those moments so in the latter days of life they could amuse themselves while seeing the photos. After the analyzation she asks other participants whether they agree with her or not. Her stressing word on 'yeah' is obvious in extract 2 line 6 that shows the signal of surprise and inquiry. In response to her, Respondent2 agreed that "it's true that women tend to take more photos than men." he is of the opinion that women like to take more selfies than men and try to take as much as possible. In extract 2 Respondent2 emphasizes on his statement "*that true I mean I know*"(line 11), which shows that he firmly believes what he said about the nature of women. Here, gender perception is obvious in the sense that women are interested more in taking photos than men.

Extract 3

1. Respondent4: women
2. Respondent2: women
3. Respondent3: why do you think that is??
4. Respondent2: I don't know it's a matter of interest

The analysis of Respondent4 (PhD student from Nigeria) also intercepts while agreeing with Respondent2 (line 3). Respondent3 asked the reason from Respondent2 that why women tend to take more photos than men, but he replied that this could be the matter of interest that means women are more interested. The way, Respondent2 was presenting his analysis, he was sure about what he said that he might have experienced in his surroundings.

Extract 4

1. Respondent1: No, it's not ma:t(t)e(r) of just taking photos it's the ma:t(t)e(r) of like women for to
2. myself don't wana to forget like they wana to have all the memories in their me:mory
3. s:o once I would have them in my phone like enjoy each moment, I spent unlike men
4. they don't care for such things I believe_{oo} yeah just whatever happened they will
5. forget in the same day and (@@@) so that I mean something like justification for the
6. number of I mean pictures women take in gener: al and something else I just wanna
7. share I just approve what Respondent4 has said about them: it's no contradiction at all I mean
8. all what happens in he:re just like a matte(r) of whether(r)) (hh) you wanna like you
9. wanna enjoy that moment up to what extent you wanna enjoy this moment or not that's
10. it they ev- I mean not even I feel I'm not concentrating well, but I think this is not

Respondent1 (female master student from Libya) while disagreeing with the analysis of Respondent2 by saying that women do not take photos to capture their best look but to save the best moment that gives joys and pleasure whenever they happen to see them. She argues that women are caring (line 5) therefore; they give importance to each and every one moment of life by catching them. For a woman taking a photo is not just for the sake of taking a photo rather, she considers it a serious task, unlike men. She blames boys with the view that they don't care for such things as taking photos is not a serious task for them; they don't take photos with the thought of preserving them.

Extract 5

1. Respondent3: I think the point that you raised about these remembering again goes back t:o
2. that issue of keeping memories that might be one of the things this comes as I have said
3. a: after remembering the issue of (.) recording her son a (d) I don't know the rest of the
4. discussion or how those people act whether they have kids or not, but motherhood is
5. 5. another issue because the desi:re to save those moments of your kid is bey:ond the
6. 6. fascination of the moment right↑ because you think that if I save it, I can enjoy it I can
7. be fascinated every day if I just enjoy that moment then it's gone right so that's after
8. that point they have stated about remembering the moments before that it's all about the
9. actions of taking photos how many the take whether they take it like at the dinner or a
10. trip o: r your k [now]

In the extract 5 Respondent3 supports her analysis and further extends with the thought that motherhood is another issue (line 4) that means being a mother is a unique feeling towards her kids. Every step and moment of her kid is very special to her mother, that is why she tries to catch every bit of the moment of her child, so this act is beyond the process of fascination. A child developing stages are quite rapid, so a mother tries to catch the moment of a child before it's too late. Another word, she is trying to say that motherhood feelings can only experience by a mother, not a man. A mother

sees things from a different perspective. This interpretation and discussion among Fatima and Respondent1 lead to gender specific that shows the feeling of a mother in every part of the world is the same. The power of affection of a mother is same and gender specific.

Extract 6

1. Respondent4: but the point of gender that (he) (0.3) like Respondent2 raised regarding
2. (eeeemm) I want to say it's (0.3) let's say it's (0.2) biological ma:keup↑ women
3. continuously want to look (0.2) better do girls lipsticks ...all these things are like how
4. they are used to [be
5. Respondent3 [you say its biological makeup (@@@)
6. Respondent2: Y: ah because I suspect [that]
7. Respondent2: [genes] (@@)
8. Respondent4: yah because I'm pretty sure that(.) when I left home this morning I didn't
9. put up my hair look so that's certainly define that ladies take a lot of time to yah yah
10. impr::ove their l::ooks and put on lipst::ick things like that ...ear ri::ngs and a:ll th:ese
11. kind of ornaments [and]

In the extract Respondent4 contradicts with the point of Respondent1 that women love to show outward appearances that's why they tend to use make up, using different lipstick, and ornaments in order to look better. He says (line 2) this habit is biological that means every woman is interested in ornaments and takes a lot of time to beautify her whereas man doesn't take time in dressing and preparing to go out. Respondent4 gives his own example that when I prepared me for university I did not take that much on hairs and others appearance makeup but women take greater time in preparation. His arguments are endorsed by Respondent2 (line 7) while saying "genes" which means that this habit is in the genes of women therefore, they always tend to go for it. Respondent4 believes that men don't have such habits while giving his own example that (line 8) *when I go out of home, I don't bother about my hair how they look like but contrary to that ladies take lots of time to improve their look*. The agreements of Respondent4 and Respondent2 on women ornaments show cultural affinity despite different cultures.

Extract 7

1. Respondent1: [so you
2. think that (hh) only shoes like ladies just(hh)I mean ladies just take care of appearance ↑
3. nothing else that's something beyond indeed that they care for everythin: g specifically
4. just let's take this examp:le (hh) if you get I mean out of the home if you are married, your
5. wife would not just look at your appearance she would ask you if you have lunch or not if
6. your cloth is ironed or not and such stuff so they care for every tiny thing themselves
7. and beyond and other as well so that's why they like to have a better [concentrating for
8. appearance]

Respondent1 negates the opinion of Respondent4 with the reason that women not only take care of appearances but also cares about husband's outfits, food and accomplishes house chores as well. As a married woman she not only cares of her look but also her husband's too by providing ready suits to wear and other needful, so, both gender arguments make one thing clear that thought and opinion varies from gender to gender.

Extract 8

1. Respondent4: [yeah, I I I agree to you because women do lot of attention to
2. outward appearance for instance I think you alike experience I shared an office were
3. (0.3) from the outside (0.2) the office windows sounds more like a mirr:or actually

4. (hh) (0.2) most times you find students before rushing into the classes and (0.3) you
5. would notice that most girls' students stand by the window and watch, and they forget the
6. fact that they are late for the class

In order to support his arguments regarding habits of women, Respondent4 gives an example from life experience that he used to see females' students (he teaches at university in Nigeria) while going to attend the classes he noticed that female students never miss the opportunity of looking at the mirror in front of the classroom. They never bothered being late in the class but fixing hairstyle, and other personality supplements were more important than reaching class on time. In addition, he is also trying to say that male students did not make a priority to certain things. They used to go to class without pay heed to the mirror, either their hair style is fine or not but their priority was to be in the class on time. Hence, gender priorities differ in extract 8.

Extract 9

1. Respondent1: may be that gives them like confidence to be better in classroom and to affect
2. (self-repair) to be affective and to understand better because I have such example with
3. my student(s) male students would just get into the class where females even though
4. they are late they would just excuse and take permission from me: and go to fix
5. their makeup and come back after ten minutes and attend the class and though they are
6. more effective than men

Respondent1, who taught for one year in a school in Libya, shares a similar example about her experience with the students. She also admits that female students used to take permission from her to fix their makeup, and after adjusting themselves, they used to join the class. She admits the peculiar behavior of female students but she seems (line 5) defensive in her statement that despite late in the class, female students were more effective in studies than male.

Extract 10

1. Respondent3: [I mean] one important point Respondent4 gender is socially constructed(hh)
2. phenomena so it does not come from biological (@@) [I can] assure you that we do act
3. differently that's true but it's socially constructed
4. Respondent2: [genes]
5. Respondent3: so, it's [it's proven (@@)]

Respondent3 addresses Respondent4 with the notion that (line 1) "*gender is socially constructed phenomena, so it does not come from biological.*" She consolidates (line 100) her opinion with the statement that "*it's proven*" (line 5). In other words, she is trying to reshape the opinion of Respondent4 that the way you think is not the reality as women are tagged with certain connotations are merely socially constructed taboos which is far away from the reality. She tries to make him understand that what I say is proven through research not something hearsay (line 5). It shows that she does not agree with what Respondent1 and Respondent4 said about women and their habits, a stereotype. Such gender stereotypes are defined as (Hadjicharalambous, C. & Zhihong, S. (2015), "women are warm and nurturing and men are competitive and independent." (p. 33)

Conclusion

The analysis of each participant is presented in this paper reveals the fact that gender differences exist, which is obvious from the views of Respondent4 and Respondent1. After going through the analysis of each discourse of the participants: two points came to the surface that there is an impact on the environment, which shapes the mind of the people. Secondly, gender perceptions vary in each culture as we can see that Respondent2 and Respondent4 are on the same page regarding the point of taking photos that show the same gender perception is equal where boundaries of the countries do not matter. Moreover, the thoughts of both participants could have been different because

Respondent4 is from Nigeria and Respondent2 is Turkish Cypriot. However, Respondent1 is a female participant belongs to Libya carries similar thoughts that female are more interested in outward appearance than men as she proves it while giving her examples (EXTRACT 9) of her students in the school in Libya. The element of the stereotyped approach is also felt in the discussion on two points. First, Respondent4 is making the point that taking photos is biological makeup, where Respondent3 opposed the notion that it is a socially constructed phenomena which have got nothing to do with gender. Secondly, when Rrespondent1 said that women not only take care of each moment by capturing them, they also do care for the family-like ironing husband's clothes which could be a traditional stereotype because it is not necessary that each culture has the same tradition of "ironing clothes." In a nut shell, man is the product of the society when the society and culture are different than the mind shapes accordingly so, the differences of opinions are not the flaw of man but the society. Therefore, we should respect the opinions despite the differences.

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