Resistance and Gender in an EFL Classroom Interaction: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Kohinoor Akther

Abstract

A classroom is not only a place for female learners' learning and growth but also a place for enacting their knowledge, power, positioning, and resistance in their classroom interaction. As important social members, these learners bring the society-approved discourses that restrict their gendered roles in their classroom participation. Female learners, dominated by their social-historical-cognitive selves, mostly do not try to initiate a conversation or participate in that as they have to contest the status quo of male learners who particularly dominate the conversation process. Hence, they have to struggle to negotiate their position and identity by resisting the 'boy discourses' that delimit their equal participation. This study focuses on the reproduction of resistance and the struggle for achieving the equality dynamics of the female learners to participate in classroom discourses. Six female learners and two teachers were the research participants at a private university in Chattogram, Bangladesh. Kumaravadivelue's (1999) critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA), van Dijk's (2003; 2016) socio-cognitive and Wodak's (2009) historical-cognitive model and Braun and Clerk's (2006) thematic analysis approach had been used here as an analytical framework and for data analysis tool. Structured focus group interviews and classroom observation were the tools used for generating data that gave the impression that female learners use both active and passive resistance that happens due to the existing micro and macro factors surrounding them. Moreover, their historical, social, and cognitive positioning and struggle for negotiating power and identity gave them the insight that the classroom served both as a learning and growing space for them. This study contributes to the budding research on female learners' being and becoming an identity in a powerful classroom interaction that can influence them beyond the classroom.

Keywords: *resistance, identity, power, equity, dominant discourses*

Introduction

Schools position learners as subjects to assume their roles in a class structure (Levinson & Holland, 1996). According to critical scholars, schools respond less to popular urges of empowerment and advancement than discipline and conformity. Therefore, schools in a broader sense play the role of aggravating or preserving social inequalities. Hence, they closely draw an individual to a close vicinity of class, gender, and racial inequality through the 'instructional register' and 'regulative register' of the accepted norms and styles

of the broader society. Thus, they provide a valuable site for the cultural production and reproduction of a particular society's values, norms, and ideologies. Ideally, schools encourage equitable access to genders, castes, classes, ethnicities, and ages. But in reality, due to the restrictions to equal definitions of an educated and less/uneducated, vocal and silent makes the classroom picture different. Thus, resistance takes place as an opposing factor to the changes that like to promote equity and inclusivity inside a classroom.

Resistance particularly refers to the opposition to the change that implementation of gender equality policy promotes. A change is taken like a stone tossed into a still pond, which causes ripples to radiate in all directions with unpredictable consequences. Resistance is well-thought-out as an outcome of unpredictable consequences, constraints imposed to maintain the status quo of the power actors against the change strategies to the equal participation of the female learners in EFL classroom interactions (Festa, 2016; Kreitner, 1992; Mckay, 2011; Hassaskhah & Zamir, 2013). Thus, as the powerful actor of any hegemonic authority education serves, according to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), the purpose of reproducing the existing social system is to fix the learners in their respective social positions.

As an important actor of education and educational reform, female learners remain the voiceless objects who are always dominated by the powerful group and by the 'hegemonic definitions of an educated person' (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Moreover, the 'symbolic violence' that schools and classrooms produce on the non-elites significantly affects the development of their social position and limits. These limits are inscribed in their 'habitus' which makes them learn to self-censor and

self-silence in the presence of those with greater social standing. So, their struggles become submerged, invisible with occasional visibility and clarity. But most of the time they become dramatically erupted by some cultural politics and priority games of the national over local, particularly over common vision and ideology of a society (ibid).

Since the 1980s schools and classrooms have become the topics of critical survey, literature, experiments, and investigation. This critical perspective has always tried to be committed to the ideals of equity and inclusivity in education in place of perpetual social inequalities (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Instead of providing equality, 'distributive' and 'curricular' justice, equal educational access, knowledge, and representation, as described by scholars like Althusser (1971), Bernstein (1973), Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), Giroux (1983) classrooms serve/d the purpose of the requirements of domination, conformity and discipline of the dominant liberal ideology. In their opinion, schools served the purpose of powerful 'ideological state apparatuses' as great leveling instruments for the learners to strengthen the unequal social order. Classrooms, according to Bourdieu, thus legitimize and validate the dominant groups and their activities to maintain their power and privileges. In an EFL classroom, this is more acute as the learning and growth of the female learners correspond to their knowledge, positioning, resistance, and power in the classroom as nonnative learners and speakers (Crystal, 2013; Kramsch, 2014; Tong & Cheung, 2011). According to Norton (2001) learning English not only impacts learners' perspectives of who they are, and who they desire to become in a particular social setup, but also shapes their identities in a dynamic learning community where power relations work among them.

Despite these resisting facts, the participation of female learners in higher education to 'become somebody' as breaking the shackles of oppression changes the educational landscape in Bangladesh. Under the dominant discourses, their voices were unheard and kept silent for centuries. Through the power actors' different production and reproduction of laws and amendments, this silent group has been given an equal share or at least chances to equally share the benefits of the same offered to all citizens. But in practice, there is a tension among the power actors, policymakers, and the learners themselves to maintain equality in the classroom setting (Kumaravadivelu, 1999). So, equality is maintained in the formal texts only which does not ensure the equal participation of the individual female learners in the classroom discourses. This study critically attempted to analyze the inequality that female EFL learners suffer/ed due to the resistance both in micro and macro levels that impact as Kumaravadivelu (1999) mentioned their construction of identity and hence the learning and using of the target language in a classroom interaction. Based on van Dijk's (2003, 2016) socio-cognitive approach, popularly known as the 'discourse-society-cognition triangle' this study focuses on the mental representation of discourse as society mediated, that society influences the production and comprehension of discourse. It develops an individual's shared knowledge and ideologies as a social group. This knowledge, as scholars (Wodak, 2009; Resigil, 2017) claim, does not exist in a single timespan, instead, it continues as the past, present, and future vision in society among its social actors. It is argued that discourse is historical, that any available knowledge, discourse or language is historically constituted and constitutive—they are happening at the same time or had happened before as a continuation of the social and political activity (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). Along with the line of discourse-historical approach of Wodak (2009) and van Dijk (2003; 2016), this study also used the critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA) of Kumaravadivelu (1999), which explores classroom discourse as socially formulated, politically motivated and historically determined reality of the learners. This triangulation privileged the study to observe the situation from different perspectives to make it holistic to understand the scenario of resistance in higher education EFL settings.

Popular literature claims that power and identity are two important factors to create resistance to equality. Women's participation and advancement in both public and private levels threaten the prevailing masculine norms and their position as a strong, privileged one due to gender differences. Added to this 'the patriarchal norms and conservative attitude towards women's roles' towards her family simultaneously work concerning the debate of their equal rights. The lack of opportunities, low returns of education to the job market, and the confinement of female labor in the household chores have positioned female learners and their education in a protected view in the South Asian context. So it is commonly observed that the benefits of educating a female child are less rewarding for her parents in their old age or needs—these traditional norms keep many parents away from investing in a girl's education. Also in most cases here, as a social demand, girls need to show 'appropriate' behavior by maintaining 'shyness' in their interaction with others that refrains them from speaking in front of others, especially of the elders and the outsiders. In many parts of South Asia including Bangladesh, it remains a suffocating fact that 'higher education is thought to liberate girls to such an extent that they would have problems

adjusting to their marital home'(Blunch & Das, 2015). So, resistance to her equal rights is visible both in the micro and macro levels of society in a developing country. The three –gender, power, and patriarchy are primarily taken as the contributing actors in the production, reproduction, positioning, identity construction, and thus in classroom interactions of a female learner in an EFL context.

Since the norms and power of hegemonic groups in an institution facilitate specific (male) behaviors, they simultaneously obstruct or oppose the change that gender initiatives try to encourage (Kenny, 2011; Mackay, 2011). Moreover, it is observed that resistance to change is mostly related to men's feeling of losing position and privilege. According to Dent and Goldberg (1999) what individuals resist may not be the change itself but the possibility of losing position, loss of ease, comfort, or the idea of the unfamiliar which makes them feel anxious. On this ground, Connel (2005) argued and concluded that the causes of men's resistance to gender equality are due to the feeling of being bereft of the benefits that patriarchy previously granted men because of gender differences. Either in a family, institutional, or organizational setup, the patriarchal hegemony expects care and services from women which is at the forefront position of gender equality.

Moreover, resistance appears with identity dilemmas that are linked with masculinity where man is anticipated to be the strong provider for a family or an institution. This masculine norm threatens all attempts at gender equality and women's advancements in the both public and private spheres (Kimmel et al., 2004; Hearn, 2011). However, it is not the changes that are problematic, but the modifications of the age-old habits to the changes that create problems for the power actors. As Benschop and Varloo (2006) argued organizational resistance to the changes is the primary challenge to the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Gender disparity is reproduced in an organization due to the practices of several patterns of social interaction and the meaning they bring with them. In a gendered organization, males work in an exclusionary way by sharing information with their male partners excluding women to create a 'men's club' network and homosociality (Morley, 2013a; Morley, 2013b; O'Connor, 2011). Above all these, according to van Baarle et al. (2019), power is an inevitable element to creates tension in an attempt to empower initiative.

Also, it becomes evident that gender mainstreaming faces resistance as it challenges the norms, practices, and assumptions regarding the men-women relationships in the individual and organizational landscapes. According to these scholars, 'organizational resistance to change' is the main reason for the ineffective implementation of gender initiatives (Dìaz Gonzáles, 2001; Venschop & Verloo, 2006). So, the distinction between discourse and practice regarding equality, which is even brought to classroom interaction in an EFL setting, seldom reaches the level of actualization.

Although research on resistance regarding gender equality is confined within the organizational, and political context or taken as the structural phenomenon in any organizational decision document, it rarely looks at the social world of the EFL classroom and its impacts on the individual's classroom interaction and participation. So far, few studies have been done on the impacts of power, positioning, and resistance in EFL classroom interactions, particularly

in Bangladesh. Female learners seem to have achieved equal access and participation in classroom interactions, but a closer observation reveals their struggles to continue and control that role due to several factors (Bergval & Remlinger, 1996; Hassaskhah & Zamir, 2013). Since classrooms enculturate participants according to the 'roles and styles sanctioned by the greater society', they try to depersonalize individuals in different ideological or organizational settings and contexts. So resistance to gender equality is the illustration of hegemonic masculinity, reproduced by the existing ideologies of the power actors of a particular society (Connell, 2005).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify how the female learner's aspiration to the equal self gets obstructed. It also tried to find out how the old form of submerge continues in the new form. Along with these, it tried to sort out the ways that both appropriation and resistance lead one to self-silencing strategies. This study ventured, finally, to analyze the steps to make one liberated and empowered in this changed negotiated educational landscape. On these grounds, the research questions are:

1. How do memory, mind, and social cognition resist female learners from negotiating their position in classroom interaction?

2. What can help a learner follow the steps to the equal share of achievement of the voiced and the voiceless?

3. How does resistance create an alternative space for a female learner?

Relationships among the classrooms, cultural traditions, constituent groups, and powerful political actors need to be understood through critical lenses. For making education democratic and empowering this critical lens can make directions for changes that had been so far addressed but could not come to a very significant realization. Critical lens and the perceptions towards the system and the light of education as a change-maker and transforming agent need new consideration in educational research.

A number of studies have tried to explain the concept of resistance in language learning particularly when learners try to negotiate their participation in the classroom interaction (Wassel et al., 2010; Dufva & Aro, 2014). As mentioned by van Lier (2008) classroom interaction depends to some extent on the nature of the subject or content being taught or learned and the classroom context where the interaction takes place. 'This may result in different ways of recognizing the 'inequality', 'neutrality' or 'equality' of power relations as well as learners' agency' (Tian & Dumalo, 2020). What is more, scholars (i.e. Tananuraksakul, 2011; Edwards, 1991) further stated that resistance may increase or decrease language production at the interaction point. Consequently, learners' resistance to classroom interactions and the classroom as a space for gender construction has become a basic topic of investigation in the arena of CCDA (Kumaravadivelu, 1999).

Discontented with previous models of classroom interaction analysis, Kumaravadivelu (1999) criticized the existing classroom interaction and discourse analysis approaches, of their definition, scopes, and methods. Kumaravadivelu critically proposed CCDA to explore classroom discourses as socially, politically, and historically determined, motivated, and constituted, although he does not underscore power

circulations in classroom interactions. His perception of power is similar to that of Foucault (1972) who argues that power and knowledge are socially constructed through human interactions. It is argued that female learners can be empowered or disempowered either with privileges or marginalization during the social discourse process. The discourse process or classroom interaction allows us to recognize that there can be multiple sources of power and to understand that power is not always oppressive (Foucault, 1980). This means that power relations are pervasive in human interactions and always involve an element of resistance (Rau, 2004). For classroom interaction, teachers need to motivate learners to deconstruct dominant discourses as well as counter discourses by posing questions at the boundaries of ideology, power, knowledge, class, race and gender (Kumaravadivelu, 1999).

Research Context

Since the inception of Bangladesh and its constitution, maintaining equal rights to education for both male and female learners has been the highest priority. Despite this fact, there lies the 'boy discourse' and 'gender equality discourse' in education highlighting the gender gap made popular through media in classroom interaction, school achievement, attainment, and behavior (Lahelma, 2014). Despite continuous efforts, sustainable changes have not been achieved because of the categorization of genders as two different species. Resistance to gender equality and legitimization of 'boy discourse' has made the scenario still a gulf apart that needs to be abridged.

With equal concern, it is perceived that equal rights do not ensure equal participation of female learners in classroom discourses. Although in many cases girls outnumber and outperform boys, very few of them can accommodate their voices inside the classroom. The strong prevailing norm in society is that girls should be less accomplished, (Blunch & Das, 2015) less voice is brought to the classroom, and that continues outside the classroom also. In addition, it is suggested that discursive formations do not allow an individual to think outside of them and that let one understand that resistance is a strongly deterministic understanding of power relations. Accordingly, Wiseman (2012) conveyed that when male learners insist on their opinions in the middle of an interaction, they assertively impose power on others, especially on the female learners who for patterned, normative, and expected rituals of classroom keep silent (Brooks, 2016). This results in resistance (active or passive) for the female learners of the classroom community. Hence, the study tried to bring forth the scenario and reflect on several steps that can address the problem with significant solutions in a higher education EFL context.

Methodology

This qualitative study used structured focus group interviews and naturalistic classroom observation (Crasewell, 2014; Angrosino, 2016) as data generation tools that used purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2018). Kumaravadivelu's (1999) critical discourse analysis and two other critical discourse analysis frameworks of van Dijk (2003; 2016) and Wodak (2009) were used in this research in line with Braun and Clerk's (2006) thematic analysis model for analyzing the collected data. Interview data were collected in Bangla, translated, and transcribed by the researcher (available in the appendix).

Research Site

The research setting of this study is a very prominent private university located in the urban center of the port city of Bangladesh. Among the research participants, there were six female learners and two (one male and one female) teachers. The learners are mostly toppers and are aware of their position and contribution to classroom interactions and participation. These learners are also aware of the resistance that they face in their everyday classroom interactions and beyond that.

The classroom observed was few of the classes under the course of fundamentals of linguistics, particularly about the 'role of English to marginalize the local and standard Bangla language', where the researcher was the course instructor. In the natural classroom setting, the researcher in no way biased the participants. The structured FGD interview focusing on the research questions was held in another setting outside the classroom that consisted of 40-50 minutes in 2/3 settings. These research tools helped the researcher observe the classroom interaction patterns, processes, and language use from the participants' dynamic perspectives.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of data falls into three sub-themes: a) the role of memory, mind, and socio-cultural-political cognition of the self: at the micro and macro level, b) language ideology, use and power of it to minimize the gender gap, and c) creating alternative space to the resistance.

The Role of Memory, Mind and Social-Cultural-Historical-Political Cognition of the Self: The Micro and Macro Level

Most learners pointed to the fact that resisting their participation and classroom interaction was initiated mostly by their families—a lesson learned and taught from the families, where mostly mothers played the role of resisting themselves to participate equally inside the classroom. The same is true for outside classroom interaction, in real life situations-- 'Not only having interaction or using language and its tone but also they select the dress code for us to go out of the houses' –S1—S6 all pointed that mothers feel fear of the environment outside the home where multiple discourses are practiced, so they feel fear about their safety and ask them to talk as less as possible. The position of discourse in a broader society and that of a classroom is culturally-historically and politically situated (Kumaravadivelu, 1999; van Dijk, 2003; 2016; Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). So the reflection of that is visible in both contexts. As a result, female learners mostly show/ed passive resistance to participate and interact in their classroom dialogues with few prevailing active voices.

Pincus (2000) refers to passive resistance as the act of 'being silent', the behavior of non-doing weakening the change or implementation that results in non-cooperativeness and ignorance. On the other, active resistance is related to 'subversive action' to prevent an implementation or change, fault finding, vocal, being critical, blocking and raising objections, etc. From classroom observation, it was perceived that these learners (S2 and S5 are different) agreed verbally with everything, but did not follow through, mostly on the track of withdrawal to prevent the change and

thus failed to participate in the dialogues and debates on the given topic. They mentioned (S2) that 'my mother enjoyed freedom a lot at her in-law's house, but she is not willing to give that to me, because her parents did not like to do that to her before marriage'. The learner lamented that her mother was educated, but still, she projected narrow perspectives regarding the changes her daughter wanted to negotiate.

The critical frameworks used in this study emphasized the practice-related discourses and the interactions female learners made inside the classroom. It also emphasized the fact that the content, context, structure, and construction of discourses were the authentic data of the micro and macro phenomena, following the inter-textual and inter-discursive relationships. Also, these were associated with the social, historical, political, economic, psychological, and other factors relating to the verbal and non-verbal phenomena of communication (Datondji & Amousou, 2019) that privileged or marginalized the learners to participate or not to participate in classroom interaction. The political-historical- social and cultural knowledge of the growth of a female self could not stop the mothers (although teachers encouraged) from resisting their daughters to be the change makers in their educational enterprises.

The Ideological Stand of the Female Learners

As the female learners belonged to the EFL classes that were already empowering for them, they felt unwilling to discuss the negative role of English in marginalizing the local or standard Bangla. To them using L1 or code-switching was bad or unwanted which greatly impacted their, according to them, capacity to speak in English inside the classroom. But during interview time they frequently switched to the L1, although the majority did not like to use English as the mode of communication. 'I think if I speak better English during classroom interaction, my fellow mates will take me seriously. Because I think English is the language of the powerful people of the world'— S1, S3, and S5. These learners' ideological standing prohibited them from presenting anything in L1 that the researcher as the course instructor made mandatory to all as an assignment, although flexibility of choice was given to them. They took the English language as their strong power to minimize the gender gap that is/ had existed for a long in society, country, and the world.

Creating Alternative Space to the Resistance

In response to the question 'what do you do when you can't resist the imposition of your mother at home or male learners' domination inside the classroom'?—the focus group discussed their creation of alternative spaces that gave them the freedom to overcome that temporary negativity of the situation. 'We passively agree with our parents, I think the mother talks with the father's tone or language as I somewhere read in the South Asian Literature course that wives/ mothers/sisters/ daughters in this part of the world execute patriarchal decisions and dominations' – S1, S2, and S4 reflected on their limitations when they had to comply with the rules of withdrawal or non-acting that their previous generations did. 'But I don't think this is the end of the day, rather I think this gives me the power to be ready for the near future when I can change the norms and sanctions of society about limiting women's roles in the four walls of the domestic world'. They took a number of idols who were interrupted at one phase of

life but got more power from those inhibiting situations. They also responded on the issue that not their male classmates or teachers, but female classmates or family members were creating silencing processes for them. At the same time, they could not ignore that this present situation is the continuation of the historical–social cognition of the female individual self who suffered as the 'other' from the beginning of civilization.

In the interview with the male teacher, the fact came out that 'I do not find the dominant discourses go with favoring the boys, it is rather for the girls all discourses are directed….as many changes took place after the liberation of the country regarding girls' rights and emancipation. Now it's not boys' or girls' rights, instead, it is called human rights. The increasing number of female learners in the department showed the changes in the scenario, although some steps were yet to be taken by the dominant classes—the teacher reflected. This echoed the following:

> *According to the Feminist Institutionalization approach (Lombardo & Margaert, 2014), institutions are formal and informal gendered structures and norms that can reproduce but also counteract gender inequalities (Chappell, 2006, Mackay et al., 2009). There have been many attempts to find a solution for the resistance to change in gendered organizational cultures. Implementing new ideas and building up relationships, rather than merely focusing on individual needs (Beer et al., 1990), channeling resistance into more constructive aspects (Weisbord, 1987) focusing on targeted action and taking certain steps to overcome any loss of status on the side of the employees after the change (Dent & Goldberg, 1999) are some of the proposed strategies (cited in FESTA, 2016).*

Like this teacher, some successful experienced ones did not like to use words i.e. 'equity' or 'women' in their work environments since that created a gender-sensitive agenda with a particular tone in the program that offered benefits for all (FESTA, 2016). In this regard, Liff and Cameron (1997) claimed that institutions should also extend their privileges to men as well rather than merely focusing on women's interests. If the situation is gender neutral with the consideration for common benefits, this can be persuaded in more efficient ways. Moreover, according to experts, the categorization of issues as 'male' and 'female', compartmentalizes the coexistence of them as the essential factors in the broader ecological landscape.
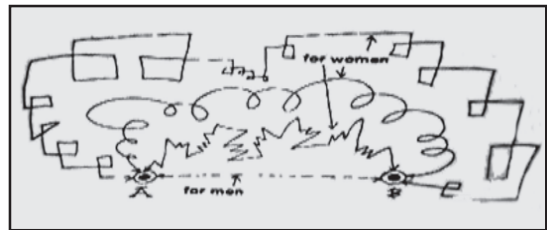

Figure 1: FESTA, 2016: compartmentalization of gender

Also, resistance towards change is/was in some cases taken as a structural problem, as there is a structure that inclines individuals to the status quo. So those situations are/ were suggested to actualize gender skills in place of gender neutrality or gender blindness (Lombardo & Mergaert, 2013). However, awareness raising among men and women for benefiting the common interest needs to be stressed although in most cases common good arguments may not work very well. Academic culture is based on the knowledge and understanding of promoting competition on the individual or group level. Consequently, the picture shows that 'the more women enjoy the same privileges as men do, the more success the institution as a whole will gain'.

Conclusion and Implications

Through structured interviews and classroom observation, this study tried to explore the resisting factors that obstruct female learners' classroom participation. By using Kumaravadivelu's critical classroom discourse analysis, Wodak's historical-cognitive, and van Dijk's socio-cognitive theories, this study highlighted issues that female learners bring/bring inside the classroom regarding resistance and classroom participation. It has been opined, along with gender dynamics, that female learners resist them when they do not find:

> *classrooms are decontextualised from the learners' point of view when the learners' feelings, their beliefs about what is important, their reasoning and their experience are not part of the assumed context of the teacher's communication (Young, 1992).*

As Kumaravadivelu(1999) mentions classrooms are the crucibles that bring forth the prime elements of education. They include ideologies and ideas, plans and policies, methods and materials, the learners, and the teachers. When they mix together in the right proportion, they can be both exclusive and explosive to support or hinder each other to the successful fruition of the purpose of a desired learning outcome and a serious educational enterprise. Also, CCDA takes classroom events as social events as mini-society where individual-subjective and collective-intersubjective experiences work together with their own rules, regulations, and rituals. Moreover, it says that classroom discourses are socially constructed, historically determined, and politically motivated. So, the EFL classroom reveals many forms of resistance that need to include an analysis of those for a purposeful outcome of learning and teaching. Both learners and teachers ('I do not find any form of resistance that girls are facing in our campus) manifest in this study their own articulated and unarticulated forms of resistance that they ideologically belong to. So, approaches are needed to address those that do not try to separate the EFL classroom from its socio-cultural setups. Rather this classroom needs to accommodate multiple perspectives so that female learners can negotiate their identities with their expectations, voices, beliefs, fears, and anxieties.

The UN has declared sustainable development goals (SDGs) and its seventeen goals where equality declares 'leave no one behind'. The fifth goal declares gender equality and the achievement of women's and girls' empowerment at all levels. Along with the declaration, emphasis is given to ensuring equal opportunity for women for effective participation and leadership in the dialogues of every sector of political, economic, educational, and public life. Scholars, like (Lahelma, 2011; Brunila, 2009; Vidén & Naskali, 2010) in gender research and feminist studies have opined for gender equality policies in education to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes to enhance the representation of women in decision-making bodies. Gender-sensitive curricula and teaching methods are requested to address the structural and cultural causes of disparity against women. Giving teachers training regarding the issue is also emphasized. More pedagogical interventions regarding this are highlighted. Rather than continuing the passive selves of the female learners and sending them back to the same social space from where they started, researchers seek to take necessary steps to break the reproductive, restrictive, traditional patterns of classroom talk (Freire, 1983, cited in Bergval & Remlinger, 1996).

Female learners' participation can be ensured if classroom pedagogy can make them enact in classroom problem-solving interaction by keeping the open forum of discussion on any burning discourses of the day.

It is necessary to claim emancipation and to criticize discursively constituted power abuse, injustice, and social discrimination to make epistemic claims of revelation or enlightenment (Reisigl, 2017). According to Fairclough (1989), power is the capacity to control orders of discourse where language has become the primary medium of social control and power expressed through grammatical forms as well as a person's political, judicial, educational, religious, and social occasions. In this regard classrooms, and texts are taken as the sites/habitats of social struggle as channels of power legitimization (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008). According to these critical discourse analysts, language is not powerful on its own, but it is made so by the use of powerful people to gain and maintain their power.

Critiquing one's position helps female learners transform the discriminatory situation into an emancipatory and enlightening one with the know-how of the solution to that. Moreover, it helps one come out from the web of fear of freedom for accomplishing her human soul and the self. Freedom is not a gift, it needs to be acquired and conquered and needs constant and responsible pursuits. Also, it is not a myth living outside in an ideal world, it is within, an indispensable condition of the quest for human completion. Shutting eyes to the natural rights of a female learner is synonymous with ignoring her own true self (Hossain, 1905).

This study is an attempt to explore the repressive and resisting fact that can be overcome by promoting gender awareness in educational practices provided with the fact that gender is not an alien but an integral part of the broader ecological system. Based on several studies, this study also explored the issues that obstruct/ed, submerge/d, self-sabotage/d a female learner in liberating herself from the age-old chains of habitus and the social perceptions to promote her participation at all levels of life. Thus, this study contributes to the growing field of inquiry of female learners' resistance to the changes in classroom participation and interactions in an EFL setting.

The Author

Kohinoor Akther is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature Premier University, Chattogram, Bangladesh. She has researched and published on issues related to English language teaching

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Appendix: the semi structured focus group interview
(The transcription)

Researcher: Do you feel any inhibition to participate in classroom discussion?

S1, S2: Yes, I feel problem. Sometimes I feel problem to arrange the full sentence because I think if I utter any wrong, my fellow mates would laugh at me.

S3, S4, S5: Yes, sometimes I feel problem, coz I feel I have less knowledge on the rules of English language, so I speak less for that.

Researcher: Is there any external issue that resists you to participate in classroom interaction?

S3, S5: Yes, at home my mother always dictates me what to say, how to say and what not to? I feel sometime agree with her, sometime not. She says, 'girls should not be like this or that, they should keep their voice low, less audible'. She always gives me dress code for outside home movement, this I do not like. She used to enjoy freedom on that but unwilling to allow me that. I do not make any argument on that, because I believe she is anxious about me every time. She says that, time is different, one should take care of one's own self by accepting the norms and standards of the society instead of voicing them in front of others.

Researcher: Don't you feel bad about that?

S1, S5: yes, most of the time. But I resist myself instead of resisting her. Because, my grandfather (S5) was an alternative space for me. He used to make everything okay for me. He never told that as a female member of the society I am no more a helpless one. He taught me lessons by going outside home, usually motivated me to learn something in a way that one day I could make the changes, so that nobody would like to resist me. Instead I can become a source of inspiration for others. He used to tell me that changing something is not easy, it takes time. One should wait till the right time knocks at the door. Feeling inside that you are some body, some identifiable one in the society can take you to the first step of freedom, emancipation.

As this negativity, I should say it a negative force, had been running in our society for a long long time, to change that will take more time than that. Because we have become easy with that, happy with that. Then I understand my mother clearly and then getting back home I give her a hug.

S1, however I do not feel any resistance from my male classmates, because as a good student I like to help my all classmates including male or female. And they obviously like to take support from me, like to have group discussion with them, like to copy from my copy where I take classnotes. One day I became annoyed with one of them for taking my copy from my table without asking

for it as I was outside classroom. He felt sorry for that and we started discussion again. My classrooms are my best places that give my resisted mind space to share my voice on the issues that teachers raise inside classroom. Although I feel sad when many of my fellow female mates do not participate the dialogue, I like to motivate them to do so as I do. They say that as I am English medium background student I can talk easily on any issue what they feel different to. I want to say here in front of you that background is not the major issue, your knowledge and understanding of the topic is the most important thing to participate inside classroom interaction. Still my fellow mates take it for guaranteed that they are studying for getting a good in-laws, good marriage more than to change themselves to an identity. To them marriage is the ultimate identity for a female self in our society that many of our predecessor's had taken that way. For them creating identity is a very hard job to be chased.

Researcher to the teacher: Do you find your female students participate in classroom interactions more than the boys?

The teacher: Yes, sometimes. If the topic is familiar to them, or interesting, they like to talk. But very interestingly some few learners always talk inside classroom and other participate less, they are same every time, less or no talking.

But now in my classroom I find more female students in contrast to the numbers of the male students. But their number increases, not their voices.

Although in some classes girls talk more than the boys or vice versa, in some cases teachers talk more to make the interaction take place positively. It is good that now girls are trying to make the move inside classroom, but till that is less. They need to be more participatory and interactive.

I think, sometimes English language creates some problem to make participation inside classroom although they belong to the department of English language and literature. Sometimes I think they have some other social-cultural issue of talking less, it depends. As they are given equal rights for everything, they should come out from that age old customs and belief systems and create their own space in broader ecology of society and the world. At the same time, I can say that things are getting changed although at a slower pace. We need to change ourselves, means our inner selves also, without always looking for the structural, legal changes from the dominant power classes. That can make a difference and that's more beneficial.