Exploring Pakistani ESL Learners' Investment Practices in learning the English Language

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Abstract: *English enjoys the status of a second language (L2) owing to the colonial past and the socioeconomic benefits linked with the instrumental use of the language under globalization. The language is prescribed as compulsory alongside Urdu in the national curriculum right through primary to tertiary education. Nevertheless, the learning outcomes are not synchronous with the attention language receives in education or society. In the past two decades, the social turn in second language acquisition and learning calls to investigate the language learning process in its situated context and the learner-centered approach emphasizes detailed systematic analysis of the learner's needs and characteristics. Consequently, research focused on the psychological traits of the learners including anxiety, motivation, attitude, learning strategies, individual differences, etc. However, there is a gap in understanding the complex relationship of learners and their learning context, especially the learners' practices invested in the L2 learning process. This paper attempts to explore the English language learners' investment in the learning process. The paper also attempts to identify the learner profile traits and language ideologies which are instrumental in determining the increase or decrease in learners' language learning investment. A validated survey questionnaire was administered to a sample (N=316, Males=185 and Females=131) comprising undergraduate students from 28 disciplines at a public university in Karachi. Descriptive analysis and one-way ANOVA were carried out using IBM SPSS 22 version. The results revealed a moderate level of investment learners made for English language learning, invested primarily on reading newspapers, sending text messages in English, learning vocabulary, and watching movies. The study also indicated a significant difference in the scores of learners' investment and Medium of Instruction (MOI) from primary to college level. Moreover, the study endorses the ritualized practices for alleviating English language learning necessitates to re-equip the teaching-learning process and adopt a pluralistic approach for planning and implementing language policy in the context.*

Keywords: English language, ESL, Investment, language ideologies, learners' psychological profile, second language learning .

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Introduction

English language in Pakistan

The English language has been enjoying an ever-increasing prominence in Pakistan since independence attributable to the presence of an elite and proto-elite class in the sub-continent; and because of the practical reasons of running the administrative and educational system of the newly independent state for which English was inevitable (Shamim, 2011; Channa, 2017). The English language is recognized as a second language (ESL or L2) in Pakistan elaborated as "Pakistan is a second language context which implies that the language is institutionalized and enjoying the privileged status of being the official language" (Zaidi & Zaki, 2017). The presence and development of the English language is a reality that spreads over four centuries manifesting an eventful kaleidoscope that invokes strong emotions and varying ideologies among people about the language. Ricento (2013) acknowledges the ubiquitous presence of such ideologies, "all groups and societies have ideologies" which is interpreted and practiced within a shared framework by the group or members of a society (p.3). Hence, the permeated ideology is echoed and evident in practices as the English language is used as a common language to communicate with people having a different linguistic background in the context (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Moreover, its presence as the official language since the nineteenth century and its pervasiveness in the society presently has resulted in its evolution as indigenized variety namely 'Pakistani English'[PakE] (Mushtaque & Zaki, 2019) as theorized in Schneider's Dynamic Model for postcolonial Englishes (Schneider, 2007).

English language teaching-learning in Pakistani classrooms

The importance of the English language subsists in society and is endorsed by the ESL learners (Mushtaque & Zaki, 2019; Sultana & Zaki, 2015) however, despite studying it for over a decade formally in the academic settings, the outcomes are unsatisfactory as suggested by Zaki and Dar (2012), "the learners have attempted learning the English Language, but have failed to develop the language skills for actual performance" (p. 21). This scenario is premised on various reasons. Zaki and Dar (2012) in their study identified the teaching-learning process and more precisely the methodology as the reason for this which was already highlighted by Coleman (2010) who found teaching practices of the English language in Pakistan as highly routinized characterized by reproduction of set text and memorized written answers, and ignoring the speaking, listening, and critical reading competency of learners. In addition, the Pakistani education system is examination-oriented, and rote learning is encouraged. This point about the problem in the approach to the subject as a cause of poor English language learning was highlighted by Sultana and Zaki (2015) that English language course is treated as a content-based subject rather than a skill.

On the contrary, conditions for learning or acquiring knowledge are not always the same for every learner reinforcing the importance of learning context and the social-situatedness of English language learning. Shamim (2011) observes that elite English-

medium school learners are comparatively more fluent than non-elite private schools as they get ample opportunity to learn and use English at school and in their homes. She further stressed the drastic difference in English achievement scores of private and public sector school learners as the private sector learners' score was twelve times higher. Coleman (2010) reported in his study that a pupil studying in a government school needs a further 2.5 years to meet the level of what a three years' pupil can do in English in a private, non-elite school. Several other studies have endorsed similar conclusions: elite English-medium learners are more competent in English, avail better job opportunities than those coming from other educational institutions (Channa, 2017; Rahman, 2004). These studies attest to differentiating learners from each other in terms of their varying degrees of symbolic, cultural, and linguistic capital conferred on them by their socioeconomic status, educational background, and other social factors which is the focus of this paper.

Problem Statement

The background to the English language in the Pakistani context and its education context presents a contrast to the fact that regardless of the position of the English language in education and society both immediate and global, and years of formally learning English on the curriculum learners approach it for the sake of passing the examination, still struggle in more or less all areas of the language despite having an asserted focus on the English language. As English language teaching-learning is a quite well-researched area in Pakistan, studies are available to probe the psychological constructs influential in ESL like learners' motivation and attitude. The results of these investigations reveal learners' positive attitude towards the English language, strong willingness, and greater motivation for English language learning (Akram & Ghani, 2012; Islam, 2019; Nawaz, Amin, & Tatla, 2015). The issue of whether motivation alone is a sufficient condition for language learning was raised by Peirce (1995) who argued that a high level of motivation does not always result in good language learning. Shahbaz and Liu (2012) in their study aimed to understand the complexity of L2 motivation in an Asian ESL setting, proposed to revisit the second language learning motivation construct in the Pakistani context stressing the need to understand learners in the context of the learning process. Mushtaque and Zaki (2019) pointed out that the teaching-learning and assessment process in Pakistan ignores diverse identities of learners emphasized on inclusion of a socio-cultural sensitive approach in the process. Islam (2019) stressed assessing learners' preferences and experiences of learning the English language to better understand their psychological and social needs to reduce classroom participation challenges. A gap exists that trails learners' practices, efforts, and the contextual opportunities employed formally or informally for English language learning hence, necessitates addressing the complex relation of a language learner and learning context to answer why despite having high motivation the learning outcomes do not meet the desired level.

Literature Review

Second language learning and the paradigm shift

The retrospection and inclusion of socio-cultural aspects in second language acquisition and learning call to widen the traditional research paradigms to foreground learner and learning context in the process (Block, 2009; Deters, 2011). Researchers in the field drew attention to provide a holistic approach for focusing not only on cognitive aspects of learners, rather acknowledge the complexities of learners and their learning context. Therefore, the construct of 'investment' drawn from 'economic metaphor' in language learning was introduced by Peirce (1995), which complements motivation from a sociocultural lens. It manifests learners' efforts they partake in the learning process, trails the opportunities learners utilize to enhance L2 linguistic capital in the classroom and community. It is particularly associated with Bourdieu (1991)'s work, which identified knowledge, credentials, and mode of thoughts as Cultural capital for the classification of different groups in the context. These cultural capitals reflect varied exchange rates based on socio-cultural context. Based on these theoretical conceptions, (Peirce, 1995) explicated that learners' investment in the target language is different, subject to time and settings, and comprising their beliefs about acquiring extensive symbolic and material resources which in turn leads to increasing the worth of their cultural capital. The constant evaluation and re-evaluation of learners' sense of themselves continue as a way of assessing the worth of their future aspirations and cultural capital. In this way, learners are associated with the social and historical relationship which leads them to invest, learn and practice the target language ambivalently (Block, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2011). It is important to connect this with the opening para where a historical and contemporary backdrop to English in Pakistan has been provided which helps in positioning the paper in the theory and the context. This indecisive feeling among learners about participating in the target language practices cannot label them as 'unmotivated' as investing in the target language is subject to varying social contexts, time, and space. Hence, motivation conceives learners as unitary, static, adopted, and a-historical individuals; whereas, investment considers language learners as having complex identities. These complex identities are formed based on the social projection of the target language and how the individual struggled to learn it which changes across time and space. Thus, while motivation can be seen as a primary psychological construct for language learning (Dörnyei, 2001) that focuses mainly on 'why' to learn a target language, investment on the other hand is a social construct that connects a learner's desire and commitment to learning a language with their varying identities meaningfully and captures 'how' actually it is learned in different social situations. Moreover, "Investment embraces the complex interplay between motivation and social factors" (Pittaway, 2004) encapsulates both the social and affective aspects in the second language learning process. Hence, derived from a different ontological perspective, both motivation and investments have intertwined relationships and complement the learning process in a particular context, and it's understanding in a local setting can benefit pedagogues and stakeholders in making an informed decision.

Investment and Second language learning

Traditionally, second language learning was conceived as mastering a set of a system which tagged learners in terms of binary traits (Norton & Toohey, 2011) having "an essential, unique, fixed, and coherent core' either 'introvert/extrovert; motivated/unmotivated; field-dependent/field-independent" (Peirce, 1995). On the other hand, the inclusion of socio-cultural perspective conceptualizes language as a social phenomenon, underscores language learners as socially constituted beings, theorizes language learning as a process of socialization, where negotiation of positions takes place between competent and novice members in the community of practice and classrooms that are complex social and cultural spaces both internally and in relation with its outer world. Chamot (2008) views learners' goals and the situation of their learning context as well as the cultural values of their societies strongly influence their choice and acceptance of the language learning strategies. Ali and Zaki (2019) assert, "Learning contexts lay the roads and punctuate the ways in which learners approach learning tasks. The socio-cultural environment of any region works as the backdrop against which all learning takes place" (p. 203). Hence, language learners can be differentiated from each other in terms of their varying socio-historical and linguistic repertoires convened to them through economic, political, educational, and other social factors (Block, 2009; Starfield, 2002). Pittaway (2004) employed the term 'broker' for language teachers viewing learners as investors who vary in terms of their socioeconomic status made different levels of investment in their target language capital. Emphasizing more, he further asserts that hence, it is the role of brokers to have an in-depth understanding of their investors to provide an atmosphere where they not only actively invest but to assist them in sustaining their efforts in this two-way process by guidance, encouragement, and assistance with a belief of attaining good return on their investment with time. Therefore, examining investment helps to underscore learners' complex identities, unequal power relations, and variable desire to participate in the target language community (Peirce, 1995), provides insights for a broker for deciding about investors' investment goals for advancement and better planning. More specifically, it helps in understanding and explaining the possible reasons for learner's lack of efforts in language classrooms and low language proficiency despite policy for language education, language instruction, students' awareness of the benefits, and resulting motivation which have been discussed in the opening section of the paper.

Researching Investment practices for L2 learning

Language learners continually assess or reassess their changing perception of their selves with the social world while learning the target language (Peirce, 1995). The construct of investment strives to answer learners' socio-historically constructed relationship with the target language and commitments for L2 learning. Narratives, interviews, ethnographic observations, field notes, auto-ethnographies are few tools used in the domain studies to investigate ambivalent desire for L2 learning in the context (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Jaidev (2011) used a semi-structured questionnaire and reflective journal in his study with three Saudi learners who spent 15 days in Singapore learning the English

language. The study probed English language learning and coping strategies for apprehension and fear management. Vasilopoulos (2015) employed open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews with 10 adult Korean-English speakers, who spent 4 years living abroad, to understand how their English language investment in day-to-day interaction has shaped their L1/L2 identity. Wu (2017) adopted interviews followed by oral and written narratives for exploring the relationship between the constructed imagined identities and L2 investment of three high-achieving EFL learners in Taiwan. Though the available literature on investment and language learning fundamentally identified it as a qualitative construct, longitudinal studies and poststructuralist framework has been adopted by researchers to capture the socio-historical relationship of learners' commitment to L2 learning. Nevertheless, these methods are time-consuming and their administration and scoring are costly, limited to their subjectivity as well. Block (2009) proposed to broaden the epistemological horizon for inquiring about second language learning and acquisition. So, to avoid inherent and potential problems of qualitative data, and to gain a more concrete description of learners' investment practices in a target language context, quantification of construct can be beneficial to bring objectivity in research. This triangulation of the quantitative approach would also address the inherent potential weaknesses recruited in the qualitative approach. For this reason, generating a validated questionnaire is a viable solution as "a questionnaire is efficient; it requires little time and expense and permits collection of data from a large sample" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011).

Framework Developed for Studying Investment Practices

For questionnaire development, the conceptualization of investment and language learning by Peirce (1995) laid the foundation. This benchmark study aimed at exploring the language practices that the learners avail to enrich their L2 capital. Norton and Toohey (2011) argued that the "construct of investment seeks to make a meaningful connection between a learner's desire and commitment to learning a language, and the language practices of the classroom or community" (p. 415). Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) provides understanding to develop instruments by viewing communicative practices as cognitive processes permeated in culturally organized participation of target language context (Lantolf, 2007). Spolsky (2004), language policy issues were also helpful to develop the model since this study deals with the sociolinguistic domain of language studies. These theories foreground wider socio-historical contexts which inform and shape language acquisition and learning by understanding the complex relationship of individuals and society, learning and becoming, and the language policy issues in the context.

For the generation of instrument, items pool was accumulated underscoring learners' efforts (learner's desire and commitment) and opportunities (language practices of the classroom or community) they participate in for L2 learning utilizing the available resources inside the classrooms as well in the community. This language participation hence connotes the attached cognizance of language ideology, which enables grasping the socio-historical relationship of learners in the situated context, and the innate ideology of language learners, which restricts or allows them to participate in the target language activities in the wider context. Fig. 1 captures the complex and intertwined relationship

of inter and intra-personal language ideologies that create or restrict learners' efforts and investment in target language learning opportunities.

Figure 1
An operational model for Investment in language practices for second language learning
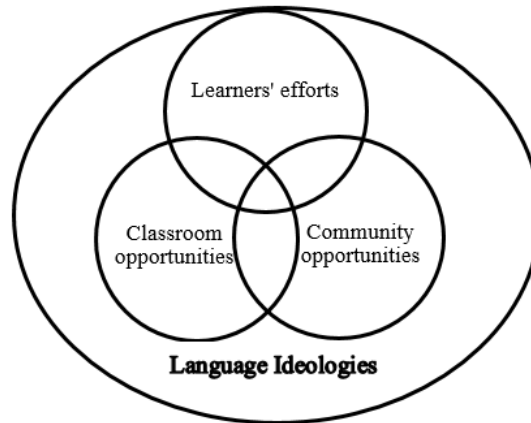
Methodology

The study examines Investment for language practices of ESL learners for the English language prescribed as the compulsory language to be taught along with Urdu in the national curriculum. It adopts a quantitative method, an exploratory approach. The study is based on the post-positivist paradigm as it problematizes certain influential but still taken-for-granted aspects in the research and provides new possibilities of interpretation (Adam, 2014).

Table 1
Research population, size, and sample

Research population	8020 learners (enrolled in 4/5 year of undergraduate studies in different undergraduate disciplines)
Sample Frame	2005 learners (from each year of the study programme)
Sample size (targeted in the study)	400 learners 5% of the total research population
	Male learners 260 (60% of sample)
	Female learners (140 (40% of sample)
Sample [N] (finally included in the study)	316 [185 Male; 131 Female]
Research site	A public sector university in Karachi offering multiple undergraduate study programmes
Study programmes reflected in sample	28 undergraduate study programmes (B.E, B.S, B. Arch.)

The study participants were selected using quota sampling to give "proportional weighting to selected strata" gender and academic disciplines as the traits found in the wider population (Cohen, 2007). Using the 5% rule 400 students of this population were selected to participate in the study. Table 1 summarizes details of the targeted population,

research site, and study sample. The detailed sample profile helps in generalizing study findings to undergraduate students at colleges and universities.

Ethical considerations were taken into account for which institutional and individual informed consents were obtained and the participants were accessed through their respective teachers. Questionnaires were handed out and explained by the principal investigator personally for filling out the forms to the learners who participated in the study. Participants returned it right there or they were allowed to fill out the form and submit next day. 316 questionnaires out of 400 forms were returned which makes a 79% response rate to the questionnaire. The remaining questionnaires were either not completed or were not returned.

Research Instrument

For developing an instrument reviewing existing instruments and establishing a good theoretical framework are two key components. These two objectives were already met in this study and to hypothesize the model, the items' pool was generated mainly informed by surveying existing literature and theoretical underpinnings. For validation of questionnaire reviews of scholars were taken for content and face validity by 3 Assistant professors specialized in the teaching of English language and applied linguistics and 3 peers holding MS in applied linguistics. Their recommended changes were made in the questionnaire. Fortifying instrument validity, the questionnaire was piloted with a sample of 30 learners of a similar population and few words were rephrased for bringing clarity as suggested during the pilot study. The instrument for L2 learning investment practices comprised of learners' profile section in which learners' demography and investment practices for English language and each skill were inquired. The second section comprises 29 items to obtain data for opportunities and efforts learners seek to improve English language skills both in the community and classrooms. The Cronbach alpha was computed for measuring inter-item reliability which is 0.868, a highly reliable value for questionnaires (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

Analysis & Findings

Participants' Profile analysis

A set of questions were included in the Learners' profile section of the questionnaire to obtain information about Learners' demographic profile to understand their linguistic background, socioeconomic status, schooling system, previous degree, and medium of education attests to the multilingual landscape of the polity and stratified status of the education system. The findings represent a homogeneous profile of learners since the data is taken in an urban context where the majority of the learners belong to the Urdu language community. Attesting their association with a middle-class family, learners conform to private schools, English-medium as the language of instruction from primary till college level as the preferred choice of the majority.

Inquiring language learning profile to gain insights about language proficiency, the improvement required in English language skill, the time for learning English formally or informally other than academic courses, a set of the question was included in the profile section. Findings informed that 6.6% of learners self-rated their English language proficiency as Excellent, 46.5% Good, 41.1% Fair, 2.8% Poor, and 2.8% not responded to the item. The majority of the learners feel that they need immediate improvement in speaking skills however most of them do not practice learning other than academic institutions formally. Contrary to learning English formally in their academic settings, learners were asked to respond if they were doing any effort on their own to learn it other than opportunities provided in educational settings i.e. informally, 43.4% of learners responded for not learning it other than their educational institutions. The rest had shown multiple periods spent for learning English informally presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Learners' English language learning profile

Improvement required in English language skill		Learning English other than academic institutions		
Listening	15.8%	Duration	Formally	Informally
Speaking	58.9%	None	59%	43%
Reading	5.4%	Less than 1 year	5%	1%
Writing	14.9%	1-2 years	26%	29%
None	5.1%	3-4 years	5%	10%
		5 years and above	5%	16%

Learners' investment practices for L2 learning

Investment practices for learning the English language in this study are mainly informed by the way participants seek opportunities and the efforts they partake for L2 learning both in the classroom and in the community. The investment practices learners' attempt for L2 learning was investigated in the learners' profile section. Learners invest their time mostly in reading skills for L2 learning practices. Each skill was further probed and watching movies is identified as the most preferred choice for listening skills. Most of the participants practice speaking skills for L2 learning by talking with their siblings or parents. Writing academic assignments and reading textbooks are the most invested practices learners attempt for improving their writing and reading skills respectively illustrated in Table 3.

Learners' level of investment in the English language

To investigate learners' level of investment for learning their L2 i.e. English language, 29 items were developed which probe into learners' investment practices, seeking information about their efforts for English language learning and availed opportunities provided both in classrooms and the context for learning L2. Participant's scores for L2 investment oscillate from a minimum score of 29 and a maximum of 174 points for the 29 items depicted for measuring Investment practices ranked from 1 to 6 points on the Likert scale. Mean and standard deviation are computed to specify cut-off pints for sorting scores into 'low', 'moderate', and 'high level'. Thus, high and low scores are the scores placed above

one standard deviation and below the mean respectively and the moderate level is identified as scores placed between the specified values. The calculated mean and standard deviation for L2 learning investment practices is 81.62 and 20.22 respectively. Hence, the scores obtained between 61.4 and 101.84 were taken as 'moderate level', and scores lesser and greater than 61.4 and 101.84 demonstrate a high and low level of investment done for learning the English language. The result indicates a 'moderate level' of investment made for learning the English language by tertiary ESL learners as 68% of learners' scores positioned the given ranges for moderate level. On the other hand, the ratio for the high and low levels of investment made for learning the English language is the same i.e. 16%. Moreover, the Mean and standard deviation of investment in language learning components are precisely captured in Table 4, investigated through a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 6 with 'strongly agree' at one end of the scale receiving 1 point and 'strongly disagree' with 6 points at the other end. Hence the lesser is the score the stronger is participants' inclination for investment in the target language. Findings revealed that learners' investment for utilizing available opportunities and their efforts for English language learning is moderate in contrast to their needs and desire for the target language learning.

Table 3
Learners' invested in skills and practices for improving English language learning

	Skills		Practices	
Learners' investment for L2 learning *	None	48.4%	Watching tutorials	0.6%
	Reading	33.9%	Playing language games	1.2%
	Listening	19.3%	Vocabulary learning	3.5%
	Writing	4.4%	Social Media/Internet	5.4%
	Speaking	6.6%	Giving tuition	1.2%
Listening skill practices b	None	14.6%	Cartoons	1.5%
	Movies	25.3%	Sports (football, wrestling)	0.9%
	Music/Songs	21.8%	Lectures	4.1%
	News	16.8%	Videos/Youtube	4.1%
	Podcast	0.6%	T.V (drama, shows)	2.2%
	Shows	12.0%	Vlogs	0.3%
	Commentaries	3.5%	Documentaries	0.9%
	Pronunciation	0.9%		
Speaking skill practices b	None	22.2%	If mandatory/classroom	7.9%
	In front of mirror	3.5%	If gets opportunity	8.2%
	Speeches/debates	10.4%	Talking with oneself	3.5%
	Presentation	13.0%	At home/siblings/parents	17.7%
	At language centre	0.9%	Public speaking (hosting/comparing)	3.8%
Reading skill practices b	None	19.3%	Blogs/articles	15.8%
	Text books	25.3%	Comics	0.9%
	Literature	14.2%	Movies subtitles	2.8%
	News Bulletin	0.6%	Social Media/Internet	1.9%
	Newspaper	26.9%	E-books	0.6%
Writing skill practices b	None	36.1%	Freelancing	0.6%
	Diary	7.0%	Chat/Social media	5.4%
	Free writing	10.1%	Articles/blogs	11.7%
	Lectures/notes	5.7%	Academic assignments	33.5%

* Learners' investment defined in this paper as efforts made and opportunities availed for improving English language skills and practices they undertake for language improvement
b Practices for improving the targeted skills in English language

Table 4
The mean and standard deviation of the Investment component

Investment practices for L2 learning	Mean	SD
Opportunities for L2 learning in the classroom and community of practice	2.9	1.4
Learners' efforts for L2 learning	2.7	1.3

Investment for learning L2 and learners' demographic characteristics

To identify whether there are significant differences in ESL learner's investment for L2 learning across demographic features such as gender, schooling, and medium of instruction, socioeconomic status, and L2 proficiency; separate hypotheses testing was carried out by running one-way ANOVA to understand the scores obtained through questionnaire presented in Table 5. There is a statistically significant difference identified in learners' investment for learning the English language and their medium of education at primary to intermediate level at 0.05% confidence level.

Table 5
Investment for learning L2 and learners' demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Between Groups	24.417	86	0.284	1.244	0.103
Gender	Within Groups	52.276	229	0.228		
	Total	76.693	315			
	Between Groups	93.56	86	1.088	1.025	0.435
Studied in School	Within Groups	243.162	229	1.062		
	Total	336.722	315			
	Between Groups	4.231	86	0.049	2.024	0.000
Medium of education primary	Within Groups	5.566	229	0.024		
	Total	9.797	315			
	Between Groups	1.949	86	0.023	2.595	0.000
Medium of education secondary	Within Groups	2	229	0.009		
	Total	3.949	315			
	Between Groups	1.187	86	0.014	3.952	0.000
Medium of education intermediate	Within Groups	0.8	229	0.003		
	Total	1.987	315			
	Between Groups	20.362	86	0.237	0.813	0.866
Family's Income	Within Groups	66.686	229	0.291		
	Total	87.047	315			
	Between Groups	60.498	86	0.703	1.275	0.080
English language proficiency	Within Groups	126.375	229	0.552		
	Total	186.873	315			

Discussion

The study aimed to examine L2 learning investment practices of ESL learners, to this end a validated questionnaire was developed based on extensive literature review, established theories, and experts' reviews. L2 learning investment practices in this study are mainly informed by the way participants seek language opportunities and the efforts they partake for English language learning both in the classroom and in the community. Learners who participated in the study belonged to different linguistic backgrounds, portraying the multilingual facet of Pakistan, however, most of them have the same linguistic affiliation i.e. Urdu. It is pertinent to mention here that the participants of this study were all from

a single university in an urban city making a homogeneous population concerning linguistic affiliation, socioeconomic status, previous education system, and medium. It may be assumed that a study in remote or rural areas of the country with a different language and demographic profile may present different investment practices for L2 learning. The data acknowledges that most students had studied English as a compulsory subject and received English medium instruction throughout their education. However, only 6.6% of learners possess an excellent level of proficiency, 59.2% of learners have not spent any time in learning English formally other than what was directed by their academic institutions, and 43.4% have not invested their time informally in learning the English language. The findings are in line with Ahmad and Bashir (2009); Zaki and Dar (2012) avowed of learners' lack of competency in the English language despite an asserted focus over the target language. Moreover, the findings also conform to learners' approach who undertake language learning merely for clearing the examination Ahmad and Bashir (2009) hence not practiced formally or informally other than academic practices.

Of the various investment practices probed through the research instrument, the analysis shows learners prefer reading newspapers and sending text messages in English, learning vocabulary, and watching movies as the most invested practices. Moreover, the collected data informs about the myriad of activities learners partake in for improving their English language skills manifested in Table 3. The findings affirm the clichéd practices employed for L2 language learning in or outside classrooms by the majority of participants. These results endorse the previous research findings of English language teaching-learning practices as old, obsolete, and ritualized (Coleman, 2010; Zaki, Rashidi, & Hussain Kazmi, 2013). However, the data also reveals few unconventional activities such as watching tutorials, cartoons, sports programs, documentaries, and Vlogs learners attempt to improve their English language skills, usually not undertaken in language classrooms in the local context. This deviation points to a changing learner profile as 'Generation Z' is more digitally resourceful and is quick in learning from its social environment. This finding justifies considering the recommendation put forth by Akram (2017) who suggested ELTs be equipped with modern skills for supporting English language learning of their students. The study participants identified playing games designed for language learning, listening to commentaries, reading news bulletins, comics, and blogs, freelance writing as useful activities for developing their English language skills. These findings of the investment practices are insightful and applied with a clear action for revamping routinized and obsolete classroom practices through pedagogical interventions and carefully selected interesting, relevant and authentic practices that promote English language skills development.

In Pakistan, it is a common perception that the majority of the people are cognizant of the fact that English acts as a catalyst for academic and professional development and upward socioeconomic mobility – as outlined in the opening section of this article, hence, they would make adequate efforts towards the learning when the provision of opportunities have also been ensured. It is interesting to note that the results are in contradiction to this widely agreed belief as the findings reveal only a moderate level of investment for learning the English language. McKinney and Norton (2008) identified that second language investment indicates a social and historical relationship with learners and target

language, doing investment to attain 'symbolic and material resources' (p.194-5). Motivation for learning English prevails in the Pakistani educational context; nonetheless, it is unable to address its complex perspective with the second language learning process within the context (Shahbaz & Liu, 2012). It is evident by the data that despite having motivation for learning the English language, learners either reluctantly or inconsistently invest in the target language or not at all. Mushtaque and Zaki (2019) pointed out in their study that Pakistani ESL learners are incognizant of language identity, unable to understand the role and utilization of language(s) hence invest ambivalently in their L2 linguistic capital. Moreover, 58.9% of learners respond for immediate improvement required in speaking skills which are in contrast as learners moderately invest in speaking opportunities in or outside the classroom. Norton and Gao (2008) asserted that learners participate in speaking opportunities when the practice community is "safe and supportive" (p. 118). The findings are in line with Islam (2019) endorsing ESL learning classroom practices ignore speaking skills which leave a major challenge of English language learning unaddressed which is inequitable power relations in learning contexts as speaking is the most demanded skill to be [taught and] learned by the learners, and their future employers and supervisors.

Findings also reveal a significant difference in the medium of instruction from primary to intermediate level and learners' investment for English language learning. The impact of this language divide is evident in learners' L2 discursive practices (Islam, 2019; Mushtaque & Zaki, 2019). The aforementioned conditions hence entreat probing into the MOI conflict and linguistic cleavage that prevails in the education system and to revisit language ideology notably in planning language policy for disseminating education. Learners must understand the utilitarian worth of language(s) to achieve the maximum from their linguistic repertoires.

Conclusion

Investment is identified as a key contributing factor in the language learning process besides motivation (Peirce, 1995), which answers not the 'why' reasons for language learning but captures 'how' the actual learning takes place in the learning context both formally and informally, inside academic settings and beyond in the social natural settings. It is therefore the responsibility of stakeholders and administrative authorities to include the voice of teachers and learners as they are the targeted beneficiaries, experiencing the teaching-learning process.

The study provides significant insights into ESL learners' investment practices. Firstly, it informs about the activities learners partake in to enhance their L2 capital, reflects, and endorses the archaic and customary teaching practices which required to be re-gauged by bringing, context-sensitive, authentic, and innovative pedagogical tools and materials in English language classrooms. Moreover, a mismatch is observed between the classroom and contextual opportunities suggesting ELTs must create awareness and link classroom teaching to real-world situations, realizing learners the functional utilization of language knowledge instead of isolating it for academic recompenses; i.e. grades as most

of the learners simply invest in reading textbooks and completing academic assignments. Routinization of learning activities is also recommended for instance it automatized the language knowledge from receptive level to productive utilization of target language, also direct learners' consciousness of their learning process, and enable them to trail their English language learning achievements. The findings acknowledge and entail aligning learners' needs with investment practices adopting or adapting the appropriate methodology to answer questions of how what, and why by the inclusion of context-dependent aspects in the L2 learning process. Moreover, the dichotomized education system must serve to build an egalitarian society and calls the inclusion of 'pluralistic' aspects in planning and implementing language policies in the context.

The study reported in the paper makes a significant contribution to the domain literature in two ways: first, in terms of tackling the theme in the local context and exploring investment practices for L2 learning, which underscore learners' efforts and opportunities within and outside the classroom, for English language learning employed by tertiary learners in urban Pakistan. Second, in proposing a framework and a research instrument for quantitatively studying the investment practices of learners for learning a second language (English). Considering the context-dependent nature of the investment construct, its generalizability is limited to similar contexts, future studies may probe according to the learning environment and include other potential components or items by broadening the framework of the construct. It would be interesting to examine the role of different variables, e.g. demographic and linguistic profile on investment in the language learning process. Despite its potential implication of a questionnaire for investigating a large sample, an in-depth inquiry is also recommended to bring out a holistic understanding of the construct. This study is an attempt to study and fill the informational gap and the findings illuminate insights for ELTs, researchers, linguists, policymakers, textbooks, and curriculum developers to provide informed choices about English language teaching-learning in the context.

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