

LANGUAGE INVESTMENT OF YOUNG PAKISTANIS IN LEARNING CHINESE LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Imagined identity is referred to as an ideal entity that the foreign learner aimed to become in the future. The latter notion is counted as a prime influence on the learners to make them invest in the target language for which they believe to earn social capital in return. This study aims to explore the imagined identities of Pakistanis learning Chinese language at a private institute of Karachi and to examine their language investment. Based on the above-mentioned aims, the study attempts to answer the following research questions. First, how do Pakistanis learning the Chinese language at a private institute in Karachi construct their imagined identities? Second, to what extent Pakistani learners are invested in Chinese language classrooms at a private Chinese language-learning institute in Karachi? For this purpose, a qualitative narrative inquiry has been conducted. Data has been collected using purposive and convenience sampling from two Pakistani Chinese language learners through written narratives and semi-structured interviews.

The findings of the study show that the factors which were countable for the construction of learners' imagined identities and the impact of the imagined identities on learners' investment included institutional influences and practices, foreign language proficiency, and individual experiences that had impacted the construction of participants' imagined identities and respective language investment in learning the Chinese language. This study provides a future pathway for the role of Chinese language learning in Pakistan and the social impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

Keywords: *Imagined identities, Language investment, foreign language learning, Chinese language, young Pakistanis.*

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INTRODUCTION

Block (2007) has defined identity as constant narratives, which individuals accomplish, understand, and project through their social construction and self –consciousness. The theoretical notions of investment and imagined communities have become significant concepts that have a progressive impact on the understanding of foreign language learners' identities. Norton & Toohey (2011) mentioned the difference in the construct of motivation and investment. Motivation is generally considered a fixed psychological construct, but on the other hand, investment is regarded as a social construct that is surrounded by a social environment.

In addition, termed by Anderson (1983) and developed by Norton (1995, 2006), imagined communities are referred to as those communities that develop over the imaginations of learners. They represent those communities that the learners aim to get in connection with in the future, and the imagined communities are formed by learners' imagined identities, which are defined by Norton (2001) as a desired sense of self that learner project for themselves in the future. Norton (2001) claimed that imagined communities and identities are not visible, but they are, no less real than ones in which learners have daily engagement and might even have a stronger impact on their current actions and investment in language learning”.

It has been discussed earlier that the expansion of CPEC has been influential and a source of attraction particularly among youth concerning job opportunities. To avail of the opportunities proposed by Chinese officials either in local firms or in China under the agreement projects, the prospective employees are required to be skilled the in the Chinese language. Consequently, large numbers of Pakistanis are determined to learn the Chinese language under the current circumstances. Due to this recent upsurge, there is a need to examine the investment which the learners are willing to bring into their Chinese language learning classrooms. On the other hand, it will also be interesting to see the kind of imagined identities they are keen to portray in the light of their plans relative to their decision to take Chinese language courses.

Language Investment and Foreign Language Learning

We usually observe the appreciation of the world's biological diversity, on the same we also need to value the linguistic heritage of the world (Crystal, 2003). Languages of the world shared equality linguistically. It is unjustified to measure the worth of one language in comparison to other. This

comparison would be considered the same if we started comparing the relative cultural values of Revitalized Italy with that of Majestic China (Crystal, 2003). However, in the modern age where time is considered money and all is valued based on capital and resources, learning languages have been deeply influenced by modernization as well. Therefore, when an individual invests their treasure of money, time, and effort in learning languages, it is inevitable to keep practical factors aside. Learners are inclined to spend in languages where their time and funds are effective in terms of accomplishing their social and capital needs.

To conceptualize the association of language learners and their respective social worlds, Norton (1995) termed a learner's identity "as multiple, a site of struggle, and a subject to change." She further elaborated the notion by claiming that language learners are frequently shaping and reshaping a sense of their identities and relating it to their social worlds (Norton, 2000). This constructive view of identity led to the formation of a new concept called investment. Investment, as opposed to motivation, reflects "the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it" (Norton, 1995, p. 9). A learner's investment is usually unsubstantial and diversified depending on interaction in the social world. Norton (2013) claims that learners invest in a language that will in return assist them to acquire maximum symbolic and material resources, which has an influential impact on the value of their cultural capital and social power.

Foreign Language Learning in Pakistan

Pakistanis have finally realized the prominence of a famous quote by Nelson Mandela: "If you talk to a man in a language he understands that goes to his head but if you talk to him in his language that goes to his heart. The inclination towards learning international languages is receiving popularity among the youth of Pakistan for pursuing their academics and professional goals. Several institutes and universities in Pakistan are offering courses in international languages such as Arabic, German, French, Spanish, Turkish, and Chinese to boost the skills of students. The world has become an epitome of a global village, which expects a better understanding of foreign languages to link people belonging to different cultures and origins. A substantial number of Pakistanis who are eager for better jobs (locally and abroad) foreign employment and education withholding bright futures are highly motivated to acquire a foreign language other than their mother tongue (Jalil, 2018).

The youth of Pakistan is currently passionate about devoting their time to learning international foreign languages. The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) in Islamabad is considered one of Pakistan's oldest and most esteemed foreign language institutes, offers language courses in Chinese, German, French, and Korean and are swarming with students, as quoted by Dr. Anwer Mahmoud, the dean of Faculty Languages at NUML (Jalil, 2018).

There can be multiple reasons countable to learn a foreign language. In the context of Pakistan, learning a new foreign language has also some specific reasons. The shift in the trend toward learning a foreign language has been noticed by the instructors of foreign language courses in one of the leading language institutions in Pakistan (Garcia, 2014). Consequently, the latest trend is the result of European countries' policies on immigration, foreign scholarships, and the availability of employment in developed countries. Moreover, the constant political uncertainty of the country along with the recession, inflation, and a literacy rate of approximately 41% are ultimate major factors for citizens of Pakistan particularly youth to go abroad for settling or obtaining foreign degrees and job opportunities (Garcia, 2014).

Importance of Learning Chinese in Pakistan

The strengthening bond between China and Pakistan is not a hidden fact. Pak-China strategic relation is the epitome of long-term friendship. Both countries complement their close bond by taking considerable steps towards each other to build a stronger strategic partnership based on shared values and interests (Javaid & Jahangir 2015) With their friendship evolution in the form of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (agreement, the bond between the two countries has become much stronger. In recent years, the CPEC expansion has influenced the young learners of Pakistan to learn Chinese as a foreign language to avail many opportunities locally and abroad. It has been observed that the larger youth population is now filled with the desire to learn the Chinese language.

According to Bacha (2018), the CPEC is the major reason behind people's increasing interest in learning the Chinese language. On the other hand, it is also an irrefutable fact that Chinese is not one of the familiar languages in the Pakistani context. However, its intensifying importance in the region due to political, economic, and social factors has influenced the linguistic interest of Pakistan. In connection to the same reason, the government of Pakistan as well as other private organizations have introduced Chinese language courses with the collaboration either of

university management or in form of private language centres. Several public and private sector universities have initiated Chinese as a compulsory language course at the undergraduate level identifying the significance of forthcoming opportunities for local youth. In addition, there are several Chinese language-learning centres where people are learning Chinese without any obligation or academic dynamism.

According to the Chairman of the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA), CPEC will produce around 40 thousand jobs of Chinese Language interpreters for youngsters in the upcoming years (Sheikh, 2018). In the current situation, it is crucial to observe how Pakistani learners who have no exposure to foreign languages such as Chinese, can understand Chinese successfully either by taking it as a compulsory or elective course.

Investment has played a distinctive role in determining the success of learners in learning a target language as revealed in foreign language learning research. The investment theory is deeply enrooted in those settings where learners do not seek immediate practical benefits for learning a foreign language (Sato, 2018). Since learning Chinese in Pakistan addresses a similar case in a foreign language context, the employment of Norton's (1995; 2000; 2015) theory of investment in the current study will be useful to investigate the reasons why Pakistanis learn the Chinese language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Norton (2001) coined the term 'imagined community' in the context of second and foreign language learning. She explained the association between the two notions in the scenario that when learners learn a language, they take it from their future perspectives, they imagined their identities and the communities they might be living in. Such imagined communities comprise strong imagination and lead to reality as well. This view about language learning can have a great influence on learners' investment in learning a language.

Norton believes that students only invest in a language when they see an opportunity in learning that particular language. Furthermore, Norton (2001) also highlighted the role of the language teacher with the argument that if a language teacher lacks sufficient knowledge about learners' imagined communities and identities they will not be able to create learning activities in which a learner can invest.

Norton (2001) conducted a case study on two women named Katarina and Felicia, whose investment was abridged due to the lack of motivation from their language teachers. Katarina was a teacher with 17 years of experience in Poland. Her investment in language learning was suppressed when she was not able to take part in a career-oriented computer class due to her poor English proficiency. On the other hand, Felicia, a Peruvian immigrant, found her teacher humiliating her native culture which urged her to decide on not to return to class. Although the situation was different in both cases, they both experienced circumstances in which their teachers did not accept their imagined communities, and as a result, their investment suffered.

Following the construct proposed by Norton about language investment and imagined identities, many researchers have conducted studies in different contexts focusing on the imagined communities and imagined identities of a language learner.

In the years ahead, Norton and Toohey (2011) conducted a case study on a European immigrant. She had to shift to a new social identity of a mother from a professional due to her lack of language proficiency in English. The new social identity enabled her to improve proficiency as she had vast social access to target language communities. Norton and Toohey (2011) also explored the rationale for the speaking resistance of women in specific scenarios. The finding revealed that the learners must own a certain image of themselves in a target community else, they will not be able to invest in target language learning. Therefore, language teachers need to assist the learners in building imagined identities that can enable them to foresee themselves as a member of the target community.

The qualitative case study conducted by Wu (2017) explored the relationship between imagined identity and investment by studying the English learning histories of three EFL learners in Taiwan. The findings revealed that all three learners had different imagined identities constructed under the influence of their respective social and personal factors, which varied at the different learning stages. The learners' extended imagined identities guided them to make diverse investments in social settings. It was further discovered in the study that imagined identities could be a helpful impetus in terms of language investment as well as a negative force that can reduce their investment in learning.

There have been few studies conducted on language investment focusing on languages other than English in a foreign language context.

Kanno and Norton (2003) studied a Japanese language learner by doing qualitative analysis, where it was found that the learner identified himself as Japanese and wished to be Japanese. Although most of his time was spent outside Japan while communicating in English, he identified himself as a member of the Japanese community. This approach had a positive strong influence on his regularity in Japanese class. Similarly, in another research conducted on the Japanese language, Sato (2018) focused on Japanese language learners and teachers in South Africa. The findings revealed that the learners invested in learning Japanese as they had their own imagined identities. It further emphasized the significance of the level of visualization of imagined community, which affected the language learning process profoundly.

There is a dearth of research focusing on the construct of imagined identities to language investment in the local context of Pakistan. A study by Norton and Kamal (2003) was conducted among middle school students in Karachi in the wake of 9/11. According to the data extracted from students through interviews, the students imagined living in a community where the English language co-exists with other vernacular languages of Pakistan.

Through the findings, it was also revealed that the locals were not ready to compromise their religious values to learn English. They wanted to represent themselves internationally concerning the English language but not at the risk of losing their native identities (Norton & Kamal, 2003). This research had a deep impact on political influence as it was conducted during the post-9/11 event. Thus, this highlights the research gap within the local context that how the current circumstances have altered the perspectives of Pakistani people. Since there is an evolution in the linguistic status of Pakistan with the introduction of many other foreign languages (Chinese, French, German, etc.) other than English, it will be interesting to explore the kind of identities and communities the learners imagined now and what kind of investment they capitalize in the language learning classrooms.

RESEARCH METHODS

The focus of the present study is to explore the imagined identities of Pakistanis who are learning the Chinese language at a private institute in Karachi and to see how they are invested in learning this language. The narrative inquiry was found to be a useful method for the present study to provide useful in-depth insights into the role of imagined identities in learners' learning and investment in Chinese as a foreign language.

The learners who were learning Chinese at private Chinese language learning institutes were the target population for many private institutes are offering institutes offering Chinese language courses in different places in Karachi. This research site was selected using a convenience sampling technique.

In the qualitative design of narrative inquiry, the appropriate number of participants should be limited to not more than two as the procedure was described by Creswell (2015) that the implementation of this research approach consists of focusing on one or two individuals by gathering the data through collection of their the stories and reporting individual experiences.

In this narrative inquiry, the purposive sampling technique is used to select two Pakistani Chinese language learners who were learning Chinese as a foreign language at a private Chinese language learning institution in Karachi. Participant “A” aged 17 joined the learning institute after his intermediate and Participant B aged 16 joined the learning institute while he was in intermediate. The purposive sampling was used for the selection of the participants, as the study required those participants who had spent at least a maximum of two years in the learning institutions to share their in-depth experiences. A purposive sampling technique is used to select two Pakistani Chinese language learners who were learning Chinese as a foreign language at a private Chinese language learning institution in Karachi. Participant “A” aged 17 joined the learning institute after his intermediate and Participant “B” aged 16 joined the learning institute while he was in intermediate. The purposive sampling was used for the selection of the participants, as the study required those participants who had spent at least a maximum of two years in the learning institution to share their in-depth experiences. In the present study, the data was collected using written narratives, which comprised of participants’ viewpoints on their learning experiences and semi-structured interviews with the students learning the Chinese language. The interviews comprised the academic background, feelings, and attitudes of the learners along with the struggles they faced while learning Chinese, before and after taking the course. The inclusive reflections of these learners on Chinese learning and their perceptions post-Chinese learning program would be highlighted in the interview.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following sections present the imagined identities constructed throughout participants' various learning stages including the Pre-Learning Stage (before the beginning of the course), Preliminary Stage (at the beginning of the course), and Advanced Stage (current phase) and their respective investment in learning the Chinese language.

Pre-Learning Stage

Participant "A": After his intermediate from college, Participant "A" started pursuing a Chinese Learning course. He joined the learning institution on the advice of his friend who shifted to Malaysia and his father's partner in business who lives in Canada. According to them, the future status of Chinese in Pakistan would be effective concerning the revolution in the business community in the light of the CPEC agreement and Chinese holds a bright future in the context of global languages. A was self-motivated towards learning Chinese as for him it would be a new and different learning as Chinese is not the language which has been learned by many around his circle. Furthermore, he was hopeful that learning Chinese would be helpful for him to get a good job in Pakistan as according to his knowledge there would be innumerable job opportunities by Chinese investors in Pakistan for those Pakistanis who have learned Chinese. Thus, at the time of admission to the Chinese learning institution, participant "A" held the imagined identity of him being an entrepreneur or a worthy job candidate in Pakistan if he was good in spoken Chinese. Thus, he planned to invest in learning Chinese to an extent that would enable him to excel in his speaking skills.

Participant "B": Before starting to learn Chinese, participant "B" had no idea about the benefits of learning Chinese. In his written narrative, "B" mentioned that his father was the one who encouraged him to join the institution. He joined the Chinese learning institution after his first year, which depicted; he was quite young at the time of his admission. When asked during the interview about the reason for joining the institution, he commented.

I do not have any aim in my mind at that time. I just wanted to enjoy my time there. Yes, my father did suggest I join a part-time institution that was near the place where I work part-time time, but the enjoyment was the only factor to joining the institution at 'that' time.

Henceforth, "B" joined the Chinese learning institution with no

imagination on what he was going to do but the enjoyment factor represented his positive approach towards Chinese. He was eager to invest in all that was offered in the classroom and got the best out of it.

Preliminary Stage

Participant “A”: At the beginning of the course, he was not motivated to learn Chinese; on the other hand, he faced an adverse and unfavorable early learning experience. His rapport with the Chinese teachers, difficulty in understanding the Chinese, and different classroom experiences confused him. He explained his early experience during the interview when asked about his interest in the class:

Earlier in the class, my interest inclined as I felt the teacher level was too high for me and she usually laughed at our mistakes. I started feeling self-conscious about my language skills. It affected my interest, as I faced difficulty in understanding the teacher, and due to my deprivation of an interest in learning, I was not able to perform well in the class.

However, there was a change in the learning behavior of participant A as the teacher began to build rapport with the students. The students were given different presents by the teacher and their classes were filled with lots of activities. The friendly learning environment helped participant “A” to regain his impetus and he started taking interest in the class. In addition, the result of his first semester further enhanced his learning attitude. As he explained in his written narrative:

I scored approximately full in my first course which made me excited for future courses and helped me build my self-confidence that I can do it. I started to understand the sounds and letters and was able to listen and understand Chinese and to some extent speak it as well.

According to participant “A”, he was not guided properly by his seniors or relatives regarding the future scope of the Chinese language. After he spent almost a year in the institution, he was informed about scholarships and other opportunities being offered by the institution to Chinese learners. It was proved to be yet another source of Chinese learning for participant “A”. He narrated this phase in his written narratives through the following words:

I never knew about the scholarships and chances of going abroad, especially to China. Our seniors never told us any of this. I learned that from our teacher during one of our classes. It was great news for me. It influenced my performance in the class towards learning Chinese. I wanted to fulfill all the requirements needed for the scholarships and other opportunities for which it was obvious that I have to study hard to score maximum

His former imagination of availing job opportunities within Pakistan, now he imagines going abroad to China to study there on scholarship. His prime focus as mentioned above as was to work hard in class to achieve good results in assessments. He imagined that if his Chinese performance was good, it could better ensure that he could attain prestigious scholarships and other international opportunities in the future. Following this idea, participant “A”’s investment in learning Chinese learning was focused and limited in the improvement of those skills that were targeted at the institution at that time, such as speaking and listening. Moreover, the teacher’s role also played an essential role in terms of investment due to their friendly rapport with the students. “A” took a lot of inspiration from the teacher and her teaching strategies. As a result, he started to understand what the teacher was teaching and gained the confidence to participate in the class as well.

Participant “B”: Participant “B” initiated his journey of Chinese language learning with a positive approach. Unlike participant “A” who had a slightly discouraging initial learning experience, he began the journey by taking the Chinese language learning as an enjoyable challenging experience. He penned down the vivid detail in his written narrative on how he excelled in Chinese learning. Due to his outstanding progress, he frequently impressed the teacher. Owing to his excellent progress, participant “B” built an ambition of being called an ‘Impeccable Chinese Speaker’. His ambition to become a perfectionist as a Chinese speaker played an encouraging factor in making distinctive investments in Chinese learning. These investments were not restricted to what the learning institution had offered but they were further expanded to his everyday life. He wrote in his written narrative that

The learning environment of the classroom inspired me as being taught by native Chinese teachers made the class more enjoyable for me. I loved interacting with Chinese speakers worldwide through social media. Also, I made a habit of watching Chinese programs on television which included talk shows, telefilms, and other entertainment

programs.

Accordingly, these practices further enhanced his speaking and listening skills as he self-exposed himself to the Chinese environment outside the classroom.

Advanced Stage

Participant “A”: Participant “A” has completed his three levels in his Chinese learning course. He is currently enrolled in level 4 b, which according to him is the toughest, and the most challenging he has faced until now. He commented during the interview:

This level is all about written Chinese. The characters are difficult to memorize. You cannot learn written Chinese until you memorize those characters. This is the most challenging time for me since the time I started my Chinese learning classes.

Furthermore, “A” feels that he now lacks that enthusiasm that previously used to accompany him in his early year of learning. The teacher who taught him the first three levels have been changed and replaced by a professional teacher whose style is traditional. He does not come up with activities and only focuses on teaching writing in the customary style. He explained during the interview when asked the reason behind his lack of interest at this stage:

Well, our teacher is changed. This new teacher is rigid and focused. I do not enjoy the class anymore. I feel boredom and usually sleepy during class. Although the teacher is good and outshined his area of teaching, something is missing. Probably my old friends’ group, which has taken the weekend program or the teaching strategy or maybe the level, has turned difficult.

It seems that things have become challenging for “A”. However, it has not influenced his imagined identity of going abroad to pursue his studies. One of his friends who studies with him in the same institution has already made one trip to China, which has made his imagined identity much stronger than ever before. He is investing more in his classroom to learn written Chinese as scores highly affect the chances of attaining scholarships. He commented during the interview:

‘It is only for the scholarship that I am working hard, I have to put extra effort as I no more enjoy my time in the class. Also, the writing area is extremely difficult.

Participant “B” is currently enrolled in level 3 and preparing to go to China for summer camp in a couple of weeks. He is content with his achievements. There is no change in his interest; it has been the same as it was when he joined the learning institution. However, his imagined identity has changed from being a perfect Chinese speaker to being a Chinese language teacher. He commented during the interview when asked about his plans:

I want to become a Chinese language teacher. As the scholarships, they (Chinese learning institute) are offering teaching programs. I want to pursue my career as a Chinese Language teacher either in China or somewhere else abroad.

Hence, it seems evident that participant “B” has positioned his imagined identity according to the perceived benefits of pursuing his career as a Chinese teacher.

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

Both the participants have achieved satisfactory Chinese proficiency; they are on their way to pursuing their imagined identities and investing accordingly. Their learning trajectories varied throughout their learning journey, which had been influenced by several factors in their respective context. This section has explained the significant themes based on the factors of the result of the present study.

Imagined Identity as a Chinese Learner: The Social Institutional Factor

The findings of the while-learning stage for participant “A” depicted the formation of an imagined identity as a good Chinese Learner. As he was successful to be declared the top performer in his Chinese learning classrooms, he was interested in investing only in those areas, which would help him to score maximum in the exams. As the first three levels of Chinese courses focused only on listening and speaking skills, the emphasis of participant “A” was on the latter skills. His practical approach which was inclined toward academic performance bound him to invest in the improvement of his reading and writing which are equally important for communicative competence. Furthermore, the idea of gaining ng scholarship

for studying in China has further privileged classroom performance and improved focus on the skills taught in the classroom setting.

This finding is similar to previous studies that indicate the role of social institutional in the construction of language learners' identities (Wu, 2017; Kharchenko, 2014; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Kanno & Norton, 2003). According to Kanno and Norton (2003), the educational practices in which the learners are engaged can affect the way they envisioned their imagined identities. As in the case of participant "A", the language institution has played a vital role in the projection of his imagined identity as a good Chinese learner to move abroad for studying through scholarship. Consequently, being a good Chinese learner is the only way to secure a scholarship.

Imagined Identity as a Chinese Professional and Chinese User: an Individual Factor

Participant "B" is imagined identity was shaped by personal factors in comparison to participant "A" where social institutional factor has a major role in the projection of his imagined identity. It was the result of his self-motivation and success in the Chinese language that became his motivation to further pursue his academics and future career in Chinese. As Kharchenko (2014) specified imagination as personal and imagined communities are shaped under the influence of an individual's age, cultural background, academic learning, and professional experience.

The first major turning point that changes the attitude of participant "B" towards Chinese learning was his rapid improvement in Chinese proficiency after the first level of the course. The good result and the teachers' motivation build his confidence in speaking Chinese in front of the audience. Another individual factor identified in participant "B"'s case was his learning experience through social context in his Chinese language learning journey which influenced greatly his successful learning process. He linked himself with Chinese speaking community using social media (making Chinese friends) and listening to Chinese news, music, talk shows, and other entertainment channels, etc. He also associated himself with the foreign Chinese in Pakistan through his learning institution collaboration to avail himself the opportunities for communicating in Chinese on local limited Chinese platforms. With the extension of this experience, he had the opportunity of using Chinese in a more exposed environment in comparison to his Chinese language learning institution.

Consequently, he began to foresee the future opportunities of using Chinese outside his learning institution to interact with other Chinese-speaking audiences and Chinese-speaking social media applications. This transformation expanded his imagined identity from being a Chinese learner to a Chinese user. Once participant “B” apprehended himself to be a Chinese teacher and his imagined identity, he was more inclined toward Chinese culture, towards, entertainment, and this thinking encouraged him to form the idea of studying and settling in China. Following this mind-set, he looked forward to getting the opportunity for getting actin with local Chinese and to learn more about Chinese culture from the perspectives of local Chinese.

The Influence of Imagined Identities on Investment in Learning the Chinese Language

The findings in the previous section revealed the imagined identities of the two participants where one was limited to being a Chinese learner and user to the other that was extended to being a Chinese user and teacher. The imagined identities of the participants directed them to make appropriate and situational investments that contributed to their Chinese learning.

Accordingly, the investments they made revealed the imagined identity they aspired to become. Moreover, Norton and Toohey (2011) claimed that learners “invest in the target language at particular times and in particular settings because they believe they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital” (p. 420). In the while, learning stage of Participant “A”, he had an imagined identity of becoming “a good Chinese learner” which made him invest in enhancing those language skills, which were taught and focused on the language institution. He did so because he believed that this would give him the advantage to be counted among his favorite students in front of foreign teachers.

In the present learning stage, the imaginations and entities of both participants have motivated them to expand their investments in their learning context. Although both the participants aimed for the scholarships, their discriminated extended imagined identities of a user and teacher respectively resulted in different kinds of investments Participant “A”’s investment was restricted to the learning context of the institution where his focus was limited to the content being taught in the classroom. On contrary, Participant “B” expanded his investments to both formal and informal learning contexts. His imagined identity of becoming a teacher impelled him to strengthen his language skills by not only working hard in the classroom

but by learning outside as well. He worked on the improvement of his communication skills.

When the imagined identity contradicts reality, it influences the learning trajectories as stated by Palvenko and Norton (2007), “language learners’ actual and desired memberships in imagined communities affect their learning trajectories, influencing their agency, motivation, investment, and resistance in the learning process.” (p. 589). The imagined identities that the participants had come across in the three learning stages were not always acted as a beneficial force in terms of investment in language learning. There were times during their early learning stages when their imagined identities became the source that resisted them from learning Chinese, which resulted in less language learning investment for some time.

In the case of Participant “A”, he entered in Chinese Language Learning institute with an imagined identity of becoming ‘an entrepreneur’ in light of the social-economic importance of the Chinese language in Pakistan. However, he soon realized that there was not any future in entrepreneurship for a Pakistani Chinese learner shortly depicts that identity is fluid and dynamic in nature. At the same time, during the preliminary learning stage, the language teacher’s attitude also threatened his new imagined identity as “a good Chinese learner”. These conflicts in his early learning stages between imagination and reality made Participant “A” passively participate in the classroom and he was unable to invest his best for some time. Nevertheless, as his rapport grew with the language teacher he retrieved his interest and started his investment accordingly with a new imagined identity of “a good Chinese Learner”.

On the other hand, although the learning journey of Participant B was smooth throughout, in his early while learning stage his imagined identity as a Chinese user’ was shaken to an extent as he did not feel confident in speaking in front of an audience. He mentioned in his narrative that it was not easy to speak, as he was never a confident speaker. Thus, it affected his investment in speaking skills. However, the teacher’s role in developing a comfortable environment facilitated him to overcome his fears and he started to speak confidently inside and outside the classroom. In the present stage, speaking has turned out to be his major strength among the other language skills. Overall, the imagined identities though shifted throughout the stages for both participants turned out to be the impetus to seek a better future outcome and resulted in the appropriate investments according to their desired identities.

CONCLUSION

The factors that were countable for the construction of learners' imagined identities and the impact of the imagined identities on learners' investment were discussed in the previous section of the discussion. The factors comprised institutional influences and practices, foreign language proficiency, and individual experiences that affected the construction of participants' imagined identities. The findings reflect the poststructuralist viewpoint, which stated that identity is a result of social construction and in a continuous process of timely change. (Wu, 2017; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Block, 2007; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

By the results, there are some pedagogical along with awareness programs that can be made before the course. Firstly, the results depict the constant change among variants of imagined identities due to a lack of awareness of the future of learning Chinese the language in Pakistan. Consequently, one of them joined the institution to learn Chinese with the perspective of availing opportunities within Pakistan in terms of entrepreneurship while the other intended to become a proficient Chinese speaker. However, as the program was initiated and proceeded to an advanced level, they became aware that the current benefits in terms of capital and symbolic resource were enrooted if they succeeded in moving to China for studying. In this light, it is suggested that there should be proper guidance to the learner of the Chinese language in Pakistan about the actual benefits of learning Chinese. As a result, the learners will be able to prepare themselves appropriately and construct their imagined identities accordingly, which will provide them with the opportunity to invest properly in their Chinese language classroom.

Furthermore, the results indicate the participants' imagined identities led them to make contextualized investments (particularly in case of the participant "A"), reshaping their Chinese learning trajectories. Henceforth, it is proposed that apart from instructing learners with essential knowledge related to the language, Chinese language teachers need to identify the imagined identities of the learners and the essential role-played by these imagined identities in their foreign language learning process.

Furthermore, imagined identities must be undertaken while designing activities for language learning. This can help facilitate learners to link their

target in connection to their respective personal and professional development to job opportunities through the target language learning. In addition, teachers are required to assist learners as Norton and Toohey (2011) suggested, “think of themselves as living in multiple communities, including the classroom, the target language community, and the imagined community” (p. 178).

This vibrant imagination can guide language learners to learn the language through their respective needs in the critical journey of foreign language learning. Lastly, language teachers need to be aware of their students’ imagined identities. This can be done through the need analysis at the earlier stage of the learning process or at the time of admission. This process will enable language teachers to consider students’ imagined identities. This can further assist them in making academic decisions that include lesson plans, classroom activities, and developing resources for ensuring contextual language learning. Under the vice versa circumstances, Wu (2017) narrates that “if the classroom practice fails to link the learner to the imagined community which each learner wishes to be part of, it can alienate him/her” (p. 569).

The present study explored the Chinese language learning experiences of two participants at a small scale in which the findings elucidated the understanding relative to the association between the learners’ imagined identities and investment. However, the result depicted from the findings is based on the participants’ eccentric experiences and should be interpreted in their particular context. Future studies can be made by exploring the imagined identities and learners’ investments of the large group of participants from a similar research site by expanding the data collection sources and conducting longitudinal research in the context of Chinese as a Foreign Language.

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