Dr. Imdad Ullah Khan*

Sociocultural identity lens in language research: Issues, insights, and future directions

ABSTRACT

Learners' identities are socially situated and historically contingent. For bi-/multilingual students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is important classroom activities and pedagogic approaches support their existing sociocultural and linguistic resources and promote empowering identities among learners. This review article provides a critical analysis of a growing body of research literature that deals with learners' identities from a sociocultural perspective. It synthesizes major themes in this area of research and analyzes significant insights it offers for effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, protection of local language, and indigenous cultural norms. The article first provides a review of the development of a sociocultural focus in language learning and identity research. The sociocultural constructs of investment and social positioning provide conceptual orientation for analysis in this article. Four significant constructs reviewed in this article include EFL learners' "investment", "identity", "imagined communities", and "ideology". The last section of this article analyzes critically the sociocultural focus in EFL research to draw conclusions for EFL teaching policy and practice in Pakistan.

Keywords: *sociocultural theory, investment, identity, ideology, imagined communities, language learning*

* Assistant Professor, Department of English & FL, University of Swat – Pakistan

Introduction

During the last two decades, the study of learners' identity formation and its relation to language learning has resulted in a large number of studies that have informed language teaching policy and practice (Preece, 2016). This interest in identity and language learning is driven by technological innovation and global migration in the modern era that brought peoples from different cultures and nationalities together (Darvin & Norton, 2017; Kramsch, 2013). However, digital communication and global flows of peoples have not only made identity an important issue for international students in L2 environments; learners in L1 contexts are also increasingly aware of and connected with global networks through social media, satellite television, and through their foreign imagined destinations in the future (Kanno & Norton, 2012; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Multilingual identities are constructed, enacted, and negotiated in language learning contexts nationally and internationally. The global spread of English and how it coexists with other languages is a major factor in socially-oriented studies of learners' identities (Kramsch, Zhang, & Jessner, 2015; Phillipson, 2006; 2013).

This article aims to consider a rich and diverse body of research literature dealing with learners' identities from a sociocultural perspective. It synthesizes major themes in this area of research and what insights it offers for effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. Protection of local languages and ways of cultural existence is a significant focus of this article. To situate the current article within wider research studies, it starts with a critical discussion of the development of a sociocultural focus in research on language and identity and discusses how these studies take different approaches to EFL learners' identity. After discussing the conceptual framing of the article, the next section critically reviews four significant concepts relevant to the current socioculturally-oriented approach to identity in English Language Teaching (ELT). These constructs include EFL learners' investment, identity, and imagined communities. The last construct relates to how ideology mediates language learning as a social phenomenon contingent upon power differences, institutional and structural imbalances, and lack of access to language based on socioeconomic class. The discussion and conclusion section provides a critical analysis of the sociocultural focus in EFL research and draws some conclusions for EFL teaching policy and practice in Pakistan. Specific research questions explored in the current article are:

1. What are the similarities and differences between cognitive and structuralist perspectives in EFL learning on the one hand and sociocultural perspectives on the other?

2. What are some current key constructs in the sociocultural perspective in EFL learning?
3. What are the implications of a sociocultural focus in EFL for multilingual learners' autonomy and protection of local languages?

Literature Review

It is important for language learning in classrooms with students from multilingual backgrounds that instruction should support learners' existing resources and promote empowering identities among learners as owners of the target language. Cummins et al. (2005) emphasize:

When students take ownership of their learning—when they invest their identities in learning outcomes—active learning takes place. In classrooms with students from linguistically diverse backgrounds, instruction should explicitly activate [...] not only information or skills previously acquired in formal instruction but also the totality of the experiences that have shaped the learner's identity and cognitive functioning. (p. 38)

To contextualize the focus of the current article, the following section gives a historical overview of the development of a "sociocultural turn" in identity in language learning studies.

Development of a sociocultural focus in language learning and identity
In recent years, a growing body of research has investigated language learning in terms of the relationship between language learners' identity construction and the larger social world and the implications of this relationship for language learning (Pérez-Milans, 2016; Preece, 2016). These studies "examine the diverse social, historical, and cultural aspects of the contexts in which language learning takes place, and how learners negotiate and sometimes resist the diverse opportunities those contexts offer them" (Norton, 2011, p. 416). Block (2003) draws attention to the increasing salience of social factors in second language acquisition (SLA) research, naming it "the social turn in SLA". In the context of this shift towards social underpinnings of language and identity, it is important to consider developments in the 1970s and 1980s in the context of a transition from a psycholinguistic approach to language learning to a sociocultural perspective.

Whereas the first of these approaches draws on psychology and linguistics for its theoretical and methodological underpinnings, the second draws on anthropology, critical theory, and poststructuralist theory to study the relationship between language learning, learners' identity construction, and the sociocultural world of the language learners (Kramsch, 2011). Before the 1970s, ideas of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1966) and the American linguistic Noam Chomsky (1972) predominantly informed a

psycholinguistic perspective of language learning and use. From this perspective, the language was seen as the domain of research for linguists only while the teaching of language was considered the teaching of linguistic forms. The *sociocultural turn*, however, challenged this perspective by underlining language as a cultural and symbolic resource and language learning as a culturally, historically, and politically situated activity (Block, 2009; 2010; Kramsch, 2011). From this perspective, the teaching of second/foreign language is viewed as a contextually situated activity; language learners have instrumental and integrative aims in language learning to gain access to desired social groups, better economic positions, and possibilities for national or international movement (Pennycook, 2017; Rampton, 2017).

In recent years, research on language and identity from a sociocultural perspective has been productive, ranging from special issues of research journals to edited volumes, books, and monographs. Special issues on the topic include *linguistics and education* (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996), *TESOL Quarterly* (Norton, 1997), and *Language and Education* (Sarangi & Baynham, 1996). In 2002, the establishment of the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* provided a more permanent platform for publications addressing sociocultural aspects of the intersection between language learning and identity construction. Several edited volumes, books, and monographs have appeared over the years dealing with the construction of identity from a sociocultural perspective in various contexts (for example, Blackledge & Creese, 2016; Block, 2003; 2009; Blommaert, 2006; 2008; Canagarajah, 1999; 2004; Kinginger, 2004; Kramsch, 2009; Norton, 2013; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Toohey, 2000). According to Pavlenko and Norton (2007),

[Language is viewed] as a situated process of participation in particular communities of practice, which may entail the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context. Thus, because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity, a process of becoming, or avoiding becoming a certain person, rather than a simple accumulation of skills and knowledge. (pp. 669-670)

The construct of "identity" has thus been used as a broad concept to study the relationship between language learners and their sociocultural contexts. As (Norton, 2011) notes, "[research] work on identity [from a sociocultural perspective] offers the field of language learning a comprehensive theory that integrates the individual language learner and the larger social world" (p. 2). Language education research from this perspective focuses not only on linguistic input and output but also deals with the relationship between the learners and the socio-cultural world they live in and the negative and positive implications of this relationship for language learning (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

Different theoretical influences have contributed to current approaches that inform sociocultural perspectives on language learning and identity construction. Significant among these include the works of Hymes (1964), Derrida (1970), Vygotsky (1980), Foucault (1980), Bakhtin (1981), Weedon (1987), Bourdieu (1992), and Hall (1997). These seminal sources provided the basis for an epistemological shift from a structuralist view of language (Saussure, 1966) to a poststructuralist one (Morgan, 2007). From a *structuralist* perspective, language signs derive their meanings from the linguistic system; hence language groups are considered fairly homogenous and consensual in their linguistic practices and the meanings assigned to these practices. By contrast, the *poststructuralist* perspective assumes that meaning is socially contested, even within linguistically homogenous communities; that language is not a neutral medium of communication but derives its meaning from the social situation and the identity orientation of the speaker who uses language in contexts of unequal power relations (Norton, 2011).

Identity and subjectivity approaches in language learning

A distinction might be drawn in research in SL/FL contexts in terms of whether they focus on *identity* to foreground the social and political aspects of how learners develop their sense of "self" and how this relates to language learning in specific sociocultural contexts. Focus on *subjectivity*, on the other hand, gives primacy to the historically situated and emergent aspects of the subjective experiences of learners, relates these experiences to the learners' sense of "self", and considers the implications of these aspects for language learning.

Concerning the construct of identity as described above, recent significant works include Bonny Norton (2000; 2013), and Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge (2004). Norton operationalizes the construct of identity to theorize about access to material and symbolic resources as mediated through access to English as a second language. Focusing on five female immigrants in Canada studying in her ESL language support classroom, she uses the construct of identity to accentuate the learners' struggles as they try to acquire interactive competence in English among unequal power relations in their new host country of Canada. Her understanding of the concept of identity is informed by socioeconomic metaphors like "investment" and "symbolic and cultural capital" – metaphors derived from the ideas of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1992).

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) also link language and identity with social justice and political inequalities by drawing on sociocultural concepts like gender, ethnicity, and sexuality in multilingual contexts. They focus on multilingual practices to illuminate "various aspects of negotiation of identities by linguistic minority speakers" (p. 1) in different countries to show

how identity construction takes place among relations of social, economic, ethnic, and ideological struggles marked by unequal distribution of power. From this perspective, the identity construction of immigrant bilinguals is framed as a political and social construct as the bi/multilingual speakers try to claim more powerful identity positions to access civil rights and social and economic privileges in the democratic society of the host country (Kramsch, 2012).

Kramsch (2009), on the other hand, focuses on language learners' subjectivity in foreign language classrooms in the United States. Instead of using social constructs like class, gender, ethnicity, etc. as framing categories for her research, she draws on poststructuralist feminist theory (Weedon, 1987) to focus on the subjectivity of foreign language learners as "subjects in process" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 95-97). Kramsch and others (e.g., Pennycook, 2000; 2001), argue that learners' subjectivity is always a work in process that is mediated through the symbolic forms of meaning-making, language being one of these forms; subjectivity is historically contingent and subjectively emergent. Importantly, while identity is primarily a socio-economic and socio-political construct as explained above, subjectivity is a socio-psychosocial construct that foregrounds learners' sense of "self" as mediated in the social world through the symbolic forms of language. Whereas the construct of identity is primarily concerned with issues of social justice and ELLs' access to real or imagined communities in multilingual contexts, the construct of subjectivity aims to foreground the personal and subjective aspects of the multilingual learners' sense of "self" that are not always oriented towards tangible outcomes, social position or access to economic opportunities (Kramsch, 2015, p. 217).

The above literature survey shows language learners' identities are affected by factors that go beyond the classroom and formal learning environments. Norton (2013) points out that "identity is influenced by practices common to institutions such as homes, schools, and workplaces, as well as available resources, whether they are symbolic or material" that shape the learners' actual and imagined identity (p. 2). Language learning is a complex process and, to address this complexity adequately, the learners' situated social positioning and their identity need to be considered as integral parts of the learning process (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; De Costa, 2011).

Conceptual Orientation

This article draws on a model of learners' investment in language learning (Figure 1.1) developed by Darvin and Norton (2015) that is derived from the sociological ideas of Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 1991), and others (Anderson, 1991; Weedon, 1987; Wenger, 1998). The model of investment stresses the

importance of understanding "the complex relationship between language learner identity and language learning commitment" and how ideology is implicated in language learning processes (Norton, 2013, p. 3). In the context of this model, *identity* indexes how learners see themselves as learners and users of language while *language ideologies* inform dominant social discourses about the relative significance of languages in a social setting (De Costa, 2010; 2012). In contradistinction to the construct of motivation (Dörnyei, 2001) that focuses on the individual psycholinguistic aspects of language learning, *investment* foregrounds learners as complex social beings whose identity changes across time and space in relation to the context of interaction (Norton, 2015, p. 37). To encompass a broad sociocultural focus, the model locates the learners' investment in language learning processes, inside and outside the classroom, at the intersection of capital, ideology, and identity. The model conceptualizes ideology as implicated in the value assigned to the linguistic capital of a learner/user of language in social domains. Learners' identity is therefore socioculturally situated, changing across spatial and temporal dimensions, and mediated by language ideologies circulating in social domains (Figure, 1.1).

The article also draws on the social positioning of EFL learners. *Social positioning* refers to "an event of identification, in which a recognizable category of identity gets explicitly or implicitly applied to an individual" (Wortham, 2004, p. 166). Concerning the model of investment above, social positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) accentuates the ideological aspect of identity construction. As De Costa (2011) explains, "positioning theory takes into account how learners position themselves ("intentional self-positioning") and how they in turn position others ("interactive positioning") in ways that ultimately affect their [language] learning" (349). The constructs of investment and social position provide conceptual orientation for the review and analysis of existing literature surveyed in the current article.

Figure 1.1: A model of investment (Darvin, Ron & Norton, 2015; 2017; Norton & De Costa, 2018)

125

Analysis of Significant Constructs in Language and Identity

Learners' identities are socially situated and historically contingent. As such, the construction and transformation of learners' identities should be understood in terms of socially sensitive constructs and research approaches. Following the foundational work of Norton (Norton, 2000; 2013), identity is increasingly understood as "the relationship between the language learner and the larger, frequently unequal social world" mediating students' investment or lack of investment in language learning practices (Norton & De Costa, 2017, p. 93).

Investment and language learning

The construct of investment was developed by Norton (Darvin, Ron & Norton, 2017; Norton, 2000; 2013; 2015; Peirce, 1995) as complementary to the construct of motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). Whereas the psychological construct of *motivation* views language learners as autonomous individuals who are motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, interested or uninterested in language learning processes, the sociological construct of *investment* gives primacy to the unequal power relations in which learners are socially situated and how language hierarchy, social class, race, gender, and ethnicity affect learners' access to acquire a language.

Derived from Bourdieu's (1992) theory of cultural capital, investment signifies "the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often *ambivalent* desire to learn and practice it" (Norton, 2013, p. 50, my emphasis). If learners are invested in the practices of the target language classroom, it enhances their desire to increase their cultural capital by acquiring both symbolic and material resources that the target language may offer. However, learners' investment in the target language is often complex and sometimes conflictual due to unequal relations of power in the society where certain languages are often more powerful than others (Hajar, 2017; McKay & Wong, 1996). Investment is, therefore, a broader concept as compared to motivation as it can capture the broader sociological factors about language learning. Instead of asking how much the learner is motivated to learn the language, researchers working from an "investment" perspective focus on the learners' investment in acquiring the target language and what opportunities learners have for interaction in the target language in the classroom and the community.

Investment accentuates two aspects of language learning. First, the social aspects of learners' expectations to gain through learning the target language; second, the individual aspect of how learners exercise their individual agency to affect the process to which they are subjected in education environments. Norton (2013) explains:

If learners 'invest' in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money), which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. [...] As the value of their cultural capital increases, so learners' sense of themselves and their desires for the future are reassessed. Hence, there is an integral relationship between investment and identity. (p. 6)

The sociological focus of the construct of investment has sparked many research studies over the years. Along with a special issue of the *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* (Arkoudis & Davison, 2008), the construct has been operationalized in many countries to study the challenges and opportunities for minority groups, immigrant students or workers, adult language learners in host countries, and refugee education (De Costa, 2010; Norton & Kamal, 2003; Norton & De Costa, 2018). In a study of the Iranian youth in an off-school English language institute for adult learners, Mohammadian and Norton (2017) found that although the learners were from well-off socioeconomic backgrounds, their investment in the program came from their desire for upward social mobility. The EFL classroom also served as a socialization space in a cultural context where male-female segregation is strictly observed. Relatedly, Hajar (2017) employs the construct of investment in a longitudinal study of two Syrian postgraduate students in Britain. He found that both students' investment in English language learning and their involvement with the British culture, in general, were driven by their strong agentive approach towards settling in the host country. However, cultural and material resources contingent upon their differentiated socioeconomic backgrounds had a significant impact on the success of the two students in English learning. These studies point towards the adaptive capacity of the construct of investment in different sociocultural and educational settings and, on the other, point towards the importance of taking into account the sociocultural factors in research on second/foreign language learning.

Identity as a sociocultural phenomenon

As a sociocultural construct, identity is informed by the ideas of Bourdieu (1990), referring to how a person understands his or her relationship to the world (habitus), how that relationship is constructed across time and space (fields of power), and how the person understands possibilities for the future (desire). *Habitus* refers to how learners make sense of the world and position themselves and others in it. *Fields of power* are the social domains in which learners enact their ways of thinking about the world as they position others and are positioned by them in certain ways (Davies & Harré, 1990). As Tamim (2017) points out, the habitus and the fields of power are ideologically mediated; people act in the world under the influence of, and

in response to, the dominant ideologies in their sociocultural environment. *Desire*, on the other hand, brings in the aspirational aspect related to what might be rather than what is. According to Darvin and Norton (2015), "what learners desire can also be shaped by habitus; however, it is through desire that learners are compelled to act and exercise their agency in language learning" (p. 46).

In SLA/FLA research, identity has been theorized as related to social positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990), belonging (Weedon, 2004), and as affected by authenticity and legitimacy as speakers of a second language (Kramsch, 2012). Positioning is concerned with how power is implicated in the social positioning of the learners and also sees the learners as "choosing subjects" who exercise their individual agency to affect their relation to the power structures in their environments. Like Bourdieu (1990), Davies and Harré's construct of identity is situated at the intersection of socially dominant ways of thinking and individual desire. Identity is therefore often conflictual and characterized by ambivalence. Block (2010) explains:

> [...] identity construction is potentially and indeed often conflictive as opposed to harmonious [...] across borders which [may be] geographical, historical, cultural, and psychological. In such circumstances, identity work is often characterized by the ambivalence that individuals feel about exactly who they are and where they belong. (p. 338, my emphasis)

About the second approach to identity, drawing on Weedon (1987), Norton (2013) identifies three important aspects of language learners' subjectivity relevant to understanding learners' identity construction: subjectivity is multiple and non-unitary; it is often a site of struggle between social forces and individual agency; and subjectivity changes over time. Although Norton draws on aspects of subjectivity as developed by Weedon in the context of a poststructuralist analysis of gender roles in social settings, Kramsch (2013) argues that the way these constructs are operationalized in Norton's study should be understood in terms of identity and not subjectivity:

The efforts of some language educators to view an individual's identity as multiple, changing, and conflictual (Norton, 2000, p. 8) have aimed at making bilingual and bicultural minorities less threatening by helping them reconstruct themselves within a pluralistic democratic society. Such a reconstruction reduces anxiety, making the other predictable and controllable, but it risks sacrificing difference for diversity, subjectivity for identity. (p. 213)

Whereas the debate regarding the distinction between identity and subjectivity is mostly focused on studies of immigrant communities, ethnic and religious minorities, and other marginalized groups in the western developed world, identity research in postcolonial developing contexts often

builds on other theories to challenge the dominance of English (Kachru, 1992; 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2010). Bhabha's (1994; 2004) ideas around "hybrid identities" have been particularly influential in understanding identity from a decolonizing perspective (e.g., Sandhu, 2015).

At the micro-sociological level, applied linguists have used the construct of hybridity to understand language usage in terms of code-switching and code-mixing (e.g., Jaffe, 2000; Kachru, 2006; Spitulnik, 1998; Woolard, 1998). Kachru (2006), for instance, uses the construct to analyze movie songs in the Indian film industry as an instance of nativization of the English language through a playful blending with Hindi. Canagarajah and Ashraf (2013) use it to explore contradictions in language policy objectives and the practice of language use in the postcolonial contexts of India and Pakistan. They argue that hybrid language practices have both identity and policy implications that need to be taken into account in language policy formulation:

The emerging hybrid identities, ideological tensions, and class divide are posing new policy dilemmas that are difficult to resolve for governments. [...] Rather than compartmentalizing languages and demanding equal competencies in each of them, such a model would allow for functional competencies in complementary languages for different purposes and social domains, without neglecting mother-tongue maintenance. (p. 258)

The above discussion suggests that a sociological understanding of identity in language learning views identity as socially constructed and mediated by a struggle between societal power structures and individual desire. Because learners often construct their identity within socially dominant ways of thinking about language(s), identity is conflictual and ambivalent.

Imagined communities in learning a new language

Research studies show that learners' investment in learning a target language cannot be understood only in terms of the here and now. The construct of *imagined communities* points towards the imaginative aspect of learning an additional language(s). Through learning a new language, learners desire to belong to other groups that are not immediately accessible to them. Wenger (1998) argues that we relate to the world around us either through engagement (actual contact) or through imagination with the later extension of our relation to others beyond the constraints of space (here) and time (now) to include possible places and imagined futures. Relatedly, Anderson (1991) adds that our sense of belonging, such as being part of a nation or an ethnic group, is based on our sense of being part of imagined communities, although we could never meet all the members of such a group.

Based on the above seminal works, the construct of imagined communities has been used to study how "imagined community assumes an imagined identity, and [how] a learner's investment in the target language can be understood within this context" (Norton, 2013, p. 3). Norton argues

that the construct of imagined communities can capture the aspirational aspect of language learning:

[Imagined] communities include future relationships that exist only in the learner's imagination as well as affiliations – such as nationhood or even transnational communities – that extend beyond local sects of relationships. […] These imagined communities are no less real than the one in which learners have daily engagement and might even have a stronger impact on their current actions and investment. (p. 8)

In her study of migrant ESL learners, Norton (2000; 2013) operationalized the concept to understand how her participants aspired to belong to imagined communities in their host country of Canada and how this was related to their investment in the ESL classroom that they attended in the evening. For example, although Mai (one of the female participants) is a highly motivated language learner when their English teacher wanted her students to share their past experiences in the classroom "Mai struggled to make a connection between the language practice of the classroom and her imagined identity" (p. 9). Eventually, she withdrew from the ESL course as she could not see it as useful to achieve her aspirations.

Kanno (2003) draws on the construct of investment and imagined communities in the context of a multi-sited ethnographic study in five schools in Japan. She found disparities in access to "additive bilingual education" (Lo Bianco, 1997; 2009) based on the socio-economic class of the students. Kanno argues that social inequities are exacerbated by students having different aspirations and imagined communities that can have a limiting effect upon access of the students to linguistic and non-linguistic resources. Similarly, in the wake of the "War on Terror", Norton and Kamal (2003) conducted a study in Pakistan focusing on school students involved in helping Afghan refugee children develop their English language skills. Drawing on the constructs of "imagined communities" and "politics of location" (Canagarajah, 1999), the study argues that, being aware of the law and order situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan at the time, the student participants were invested in the English literacy practices of the school. English was perceived as the language of technology, global access, and most importantly, a peaceful future for Pakistan. The attraction of English was attributed to achieving imagined futures and escaping the present-day harsh reality of their social context in the wake of the "War on Terror".

The above sections indicate that the three concepts of investment, identity, and imagined communities have proved useful in understanding language learners' commitment in ESL/EFL contexts. Important aspects relevant to the present article include the sociological focus of these constructs. Language learning is understood in terms of how the habitus (the "normal" ways of thinking in a social setting) are contested in fields of power (schools, classrooms, home, society) and how learners challenge these powers through the exercise of their agency, imagination, and desire.

Ideology in language learning

In recent years, researchers have called for theorizing and researching language learning that explicitly critiques ideology (De Costa, 2010). Ideology can be understood as normative sets of ideas that "control social distribution of different forms of capital including linguistic capital, mediated through ideologically supported ways of thinking and systemic structures" (Darvin, Ron & Norton, 2015, p. 43). For Bourdieu (1992), *forms of capital* include economic capital (wealth, physical possessions); cultural capital (educational credentials, cultural artifacts); social capital (networks of social power); and symbolic capital (acknowledgment of the legitimacy of these forms of capital). The value and distribution of these "capitals" are ideologically structured and constantly negotiated in social sites of struggle (Darvin, Ron & Norton, 2017).

The ideological dimension in language learning has gained attention in recent literature (Blommaert, 2006; Blommaert & Rampton, 2012; De Costa, 2010; Heller, 2011). It is asserted that, in offline/online contacts, literacy (especially in English) has become more important to claim the right to speak (Janks, 2009) while power structures constraining or facilitating this right have become increasingly invisible (Kramsch, 2013). However, few studies are available that give specific attention to the role of ideology in language learning. Darvin and Norton (2017) made ideology a key aspect of their model of investment in language learning. However, they recognize that "since the expanded model of investment has only recently been made available in the literature, research which draws on the model is in its early stages" (p.233). A few studies that have drawn on the model include Barkhuizen (2016) who explores the analytical potential of this model in the context of a longitudinal study of identities of a pre-service ESL teacher in New Zealand who originally migrated from the Pacific Island of Tonga. Barkhuizen notes that a key aspect of his study is that "the researcher includes reflexive personal commentary on his positioning throughout the article" while using the model of investment for data interpretation (p. 655). Relatedly, using the model of investment, Uju Anya (2016) focuses on the language learning experiences of African-American learners of Portuguese in Brazil. Her study focuses on how the construction and negotiation of identities along racial, gendered, and class lines affected the investment of these learners in the language learning practices in study abroad.

Discussion and Conclusion

EFL glocalized in local contexts

The above analysis indicates that studies of how the subjective, ideological, and aspirational aspects of English language learners affect learners' investment in acquiring a new language have proved beneficial. Such

research contextualizes language learning in socially situated realities. The global spread of English in the present era and its association with economic and ideological factors cannot be dissociated from learners' desire to acquire English (Pennycook, 2017). English as a global lingua franca is thus glocalized in local practices, ways of learning and speaking, and local socio-economic class distinction based on linguistic markers like accents and dialects. In the context of EFL learning in multilingual contexts, this article set out to put the current sociocultural research in perspective in terms of its theoretical, methodological, historical, and empirical aspects. Research literature surveyed in the article suggests that the global spread of English (Phillipson, 1992; 2009) is increasingly analyzed in local contexts to understand the politics of language and how learners' identities are affected in these contexts (Blommaert, 2006; Blommaert et al., 2012). A sociocultural analysis of EFL learners' identity construction in Pakistan can contribute to this literature through the analysis of the struggles and aspirations of the students under local and global factors. Pennycook's (2017) remarks are quite instructive in this regard:

[English is] enmeshed in complex local contexts of power and struggle. [...] To understand the power and politics of ELT we need detailed understandings of the role English plays in relation to local languages, politics, and economies. This requires meticulous studies of English and its users, as well as theories of power that are well adapted to contextual understandings. (p. xi)

As Pennycook suggests, "meticulous studies of English and its users" are needed if we want to affect the broader aspects of language learning. In Pakistan, there is a need for EFL research to focus on learners' perspectives about their multilingual resources in different school systems and social domains and how these relate to their identity formation.

Enhancing students' investment in EFL classrooms

The above study suggests that student investment in EFL learning is important. To enhance students' investment in EFL classrooms, it is productive to investigate their investment in learning a new language as a socioculturally contingent phenomenon and not an individual non-mediated process. Effective EFL teaching/learning requires that the investment of the students need to be understood in terms of their emerging identities, forms of capital, and imagined communities (Norton, 2011). These aspects of language learners' investment are mediated through ideological factors and their relationships in academic social and domestic domains. Language learning is therefore a differentiated situated practice and classroom activities participate in the socially contingent learning of a new language. Investment of the students is enhanced when classroom processes and pedagogical

practices are in harmony with the sociocultural identities of the students and encourages a range of learner and speaker identities.

Students bring a range of forms of capital to the classroom. They also have imagined communities associated with the target language. Classroom practices can build on the students' existing cultural capitals to learn another language. EFL teachers can link classroom activities with students' multilingual/bilingual social and cultural life. Affirmation of students' imagined communities enhances their investment in the target language. Language teacher education programs can focus on encouraging teachers to be innovative to explore opportunities in their classrooms to teach language as a system and as a form of social practice. If language teachers participate in the socio-cultural context of their classroom by encouraging students' local identities and imagined communities, a range of possibilities can open up in terms of English learning as local practice and preservation of local languages. Classrooms based on this broader conception of language learning and use are transformative spaces suitable for challenging and subverting local inequities based on gender and socioeconomic class.

Future directions

Discussion in this article suggests that power is a key construct in the language classroom and the global ELT industry. For the ownership of English at the local level, ELT concepts and practices have transformed over the last two decades. A key point for future directions relates to the language teachers' role in bringing social and educational change. Critical pedagogy and locally suitable ways of learning English can democratize classrooms and open room for discussion on local social and cultural issues. In the present age of globalization, the hegemony of Western-dominated ELT teaching philosophies and methods need to be unsettled by promoting divergent teaching methods from the periphery and local vernacular approaches (Canagarajah, 2004). In the interest of a better and more democratic ELT field, teaching approaches and methods need to be pluralized based on socioculturally sensitive conceptions of EFL learning.

In the contexts of Pakistan, it is significant that English is getting more hybrid and integrated with other local languages. Pakistan needs to adopt critical pedagogical approaches and methods that are better suited to the multilingual context of the country. The interface between language and identity in Pakistan needs to be studied in terms of the contextual realities of the sociocultural backgrounds of the students, their actual and imagined identities, and how ideologies permeate the EFL classroom in the specific social context in the country.

REFERENCES

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities* (revised ed.). London, UK: Verso.

Anya, U. (2016). *Racialized identities in second language learning: Speaking blackness in Brazil*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Arkoudis, S., & Davison, C. (2008). Chinese Students Perspectives on their social, cognitive, and linguistic investment in English medium interaction. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication, 18*(1), 3-8.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). In Holquist M. (Ed.), *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.

Barkhuizen, G. (2016). A short story approach to analyzing teacher (imagined) identities over time. *Tesol Quarterly, 50*(3), 655-683.

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The location of culture*. London, UK: Routledge.

Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (2016). A linguistic ethnography of identity: Adopting a heteroglossic fame. In S. Preese (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and identity* (pp. 272-288). New York, NY: Routledge.

Block, D. (2003). *The social turn in second language acquisition*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Block, D. (2009). Identity in applied linguistics: The need for conceptual exploration. *Contemporary Applied Linguistics, 1*, 215-232.

Block, D. (2010). Researching language and identity. In B. Paltridge, & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Continuum companion to research methods in applied linguistics* (pp. 337-349). New York, NY: Continuum.

Blommaert, J. (2006). Language policy and national identity. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *An introduction to language policy: theory and method* (pp. 238254). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Blommaert, J. (2008). *Grassroots literacy: Writing, identity and voice in central Africa*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Blommaert, J., Leppänen, S., & Spotti, M. (2012). Endangering multilingualism. In J. Blommaert, S. Leppänen & T. Raisanen (Eds.), *Dangerous multilinugalism: Northern perspectives on order, purity, and normality* (pp. 1-21). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Blommaert, J., & Rampton, B. (2012). Language and superdiversity. *Diversities, 13*(2), 1-22.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge university press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London, UK: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1992). In Thompson J. B. (Ed.), *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Canagarajah, S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Canagarajah, S. (2004). Subversive identities, pedagogical safe houses, and critical learning. In Norton, B., & Toohey, Kelleen (Ed.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 116-137). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Canagarajah, S., & Ashraf, H. (2013). Multilingualism and education in South Asia: Resolving policy/practice dilemmas. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 33*, 258-285.

Chomsky, N. (1972). *Language and mind*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The Modern Language Journal, 94*(1), 103-115.

Cummins, J., Bismilla, V., Chow, P., Cohen, S., Giampapa, F., Leoni, L., & Sandhu, P. (2005). Affirming identity in multilingual classrooms. *Educational Leadership, 63*(1), 38-43.

Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2017). Language, identity and investment in the 21st century. *Langage Et Société, 157*(3), 19–38.

Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015). Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 35*, 36–56.

Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2017). Language, identity, and investment in the twenty-first century. In S. May (Ed.), *Language policy and political issues in education* (pp. 227-240). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 20*(1), 43–63.

De Costa, P. I. (2010). Language ideologies and standard English language policy in Singapore: Responses of a 'designer immigrant' student. *Language Policy, 9*(3), 217–239.

De Costa, P. I. (2011). Using language ideology and positioning to broaden the SLA learner beliefs landscape: The case of an ESL learner from China. *System, 39*(3), 347–358.

Derrida, J. (1970). Structure, Sign, and Play in the Language of the Human Sciences. In R. Macksey, & E. Donato (Eds.), *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (pp. 247–272). London, UK: JHU Press.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2013). *Teaching and researching motivation*. London, UK: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1980). In Gordon C. (Ed.), *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977*. Brighton, Sussex, UK: Harvester Press.

Hajar, A. (2017). Identity, investment and language learning strategies of two Syrian students in Syria and Britain. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 30*(3), 250–264.

Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London, UK: The Open University Press.

Heller, M. (2011). *Paths to post-nationalism: A critical ethnography of language and identity*. London, UK: Oxford University Press.

Hymes, D. (1964). Introduction: Toward ethnographies of communication. *American Anthropologist, 66*(6), 1–34.

Jaffe, A. (2000). Comic performance and the articulation of hybrid identity. *Pragmatics, 10*(1), 39–59.

Janks, H. (2009). *Literacy and power*. London, UK: Routledge.

Kachru, B. B. (1992). *The other tongue: English across cultures*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Kachru, B. B. (2006). The English language in the outer circle. *World Englishes, 3*, 241-255.

Kanno, Y. (2003). Imagined communities, school visions, and the education of bilingual students in Japan. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 2*(4), 285–300.

Kanno, Y., & Norton, B. (2012). *Imagined Communities and Educational Possibilities: A Special Issue of the journal of Language, Identity, and Education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Kinginger, C. (2004). Alice doesn't live here anymore: Foreign language learning and identity reconstruction. *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts, 21*(2), 219–242.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2010). *The Routledge handbook of world Englishes*. London, UK: Routledge.

Kramsch, C. (2015). Identity and Subjectivity: Different Timescales, Different Methodologies. In F. Dervin, & K. Risager (Eds.), *Researching Identity and Interculturality* (pp. 211–230). London: Routledge.

Kramsch, C. (2009). *The multilingual subject: What foreign language learners say about their experience and why it matters*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2011). Language and culture. In J. Simpson (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of applied linguistics* (1st ed., pp. 305-317). London, UK: Routledge.

Kramsch, C. (2012). Authenticity and legitimacy in multilingual SLA. *Critical Multilingualism Studies, 1*(1), 107–128.

Kramsch, C. (2013). Afterword. In B. Norton (Ed.), *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation* (pp. 192-199). Bristol, UK: Multilingual matters.

Kramsch, C., Zhang, L., & Jessner, U. (2015). The legitimacy gap: Multilingual language teachers in an era of globalization. *The Multilingual Challenge: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives, 16*, 87.

Lo Bianco, J. (1997). English and pluralistic policies: The case of Australia. In W. Egginton, & H. Wren (Eds.), *Language Policy: dominant English, pluralist challenges* (pp. 107–119). Amsterdam, NLD: John Benjamins Publishing.

Lo Bianco, J. Organising for multilingualism: Ecological and sociological perspectives. *TESOL Symposium on Keeping Language Alive,* 1-18.

Martin-Jones, M., & Heller, M. (1996). Introduction to the special issues on education in multilingual settings: Discourse, identities, and power. *Linguistics and Education, 2*(8), 127–137.

McKay, S. L., & Wong, S. C. (1996). Multiple discourses, multiple identities: Investment and agency in second-language learning among Chinese adolescent immigrant students. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(3), 577–609.

Mohammadian Haghighi, F., & Norton, B. (2017). The role of English language institutes in Iran. *TESOL Quarterly, 51*(2), 428–438.

Morgan, B. (2007). Poststructuralism and applied linguistics. In J. Cummins (Ed.), *International handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 1033-1052). New York, NY: Springer.

Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*(3), 409–429.

Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change.* Harlow, England: Longman.

Norton, B. (2011). Identity. In J. Simpson (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of applied linguistics* (1st ed., pp. 318–330). London, UK: Routledge.

Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation* (2nd ed.). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Norton, B., & De Costa, P. I. (2018). Research tasks on identity in language learning and teaching. *Language Teaching, 51*(1), 90–112.

Norton, B., & Kamal, F. (2003). The imagined communities of English language learners in a Pakistani school. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 2*(4), 301–317.

Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (2004). *Negotiation of identities in multilingual settings*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Pavlenko, A., & Norton, B. (2007). Imagined communities, identity, and English language learning. In J. Cummins, & C. Davison (Eds.), *International handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 669–680). New York, NY: Springer.

Peirce, B. N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*(1), 9–31.

Pennycook, A. (2000). English, politics, ideology: From colonial celebration to postcolonial performativity. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *Ideology, politics and language policies: Focus on English* (pp. 107–119). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Pennycook, A. (2017). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pérez-Milans, M. (2016). Language and identity in linguistic ethnography. In S. Preece (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity* (pp. 83–97). New York, NY: Routledge.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. London, UK: Oxford University Press.

Phillipson, R. (2006). Language policy and linguistic imperialism. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method* (pp. 346–361). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Phillipson, R. (2009). *Linguistic imperialism continued*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Phillipson, R. (2013). *Linguistic imperialism continued*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Preece, S. (Ed.). (2016). *The Routledge handbook of language and identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Rampton, B. (2017). *Crossing: Language and ethnicity among adolescents*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Sandhu, P. (2015). Stylizing voices, stances, and identities related to medium of education in India. *Multilingua, 34*(2), 211–235.

Sarangi, S., & Baynham, M. (1996). Discursive construction of educational identities: Alternative readings. *Language and Education, 10*(2-3)

Saussure, F. d. (1966). *Course in general linguistics*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Spitulnik, D. (1998). The language of the city: Town Bemba as urban hybridity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 8*(1), 30–59.

Tamim, T. (2017). Languages, Symbolic Power and Multidimensional Poverty in the Context of Pakistan. *European Journal of Language and Literature, 3*(3), 70–79.

Toohey, K. (2000). *Learning English at school: identity, social relations, and classroom practice*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1980). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge: Harvard university press.

Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Weedon, C. (2004). *Identity and Culture*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, UK.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Woolard, K. A. (1998). Simultaneity and bivalency as strategies in bilingualism. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 8*(1), 3–29.