Investment in Learning English as an Additional Language: A Study with Pre-service Teachers

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Citation: Ortega, P. F., Hernandez, M. A., Kaya, J. and Olaya, A. (2024). Investment in Learning English as an Additional Language: A Study with Pre-service Teachers. *Colomb. Appl. Linguistic. J.*, *26*(2), pp. 22-34.
Received: 19-Sep.-2023 / **Accepted:** 07-Jun.-2024
DOI: https://doi.org/10.14483/22487085.21210

Abstract

Learning additional languages is an experience and a process influenced by numerous aspects. This article presents a qualitative case study focused on the aspects influencing the investment of seven learners of English as an additional language, all of whom are pre-service teachers pursuing bachelor's degrees in English education. The data under consideration is part of a larger intervention-based action research study that explored the language learning experiences of twenty pre-service teachers enrolled in a teacher preparation program at a public university in Colombia. The study is grounded in Darvin and Norton's (2015) concept of investment and highlights the significance of communities of practice (Wenger, 2011). We analyzed open-ended interviews using Saldaña's (2016) coding framework. The findings suggested that the investment of additional language learners can be influenced by their teachers' pedagogical practices, the learning communities created by teachers, and the learners' own imagined selves or identities. We discussed the implications of these findings for language teachers, language centers or institutes, and teacher education programs.

Keywords: additional language learning, communities of learners, identity, investment, pre-service teachers

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El *Investment* de los Estudiantes en el Aprendizaje de Inglés como Lengua Adicional: Un Estudio con Futuros Profesores

Resumen

El aprendizaje de idiomas es una experiencia y un proceso influenciado por una variedad de aspectos. Este artículo presenta un estudio de caso cualitativo enfocado en los aspectos que influyeron el compromiso (*investment*) de siete estudiantes de un programa de licenciatura en inglés como lengua adicional en su aprendizaje del idioma. Los datos considerados provienen de un estudio más amplio que investigó las experiencias de aprendizaje de idiomas de los futuros profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera en una universidad pública colombiana. Tomando como base el modelo de *investment* de Darvin y Norton (2015), se resalta el impacto de las comunidades de práctica en el aprendizaje de una lengua adicional (Wenger, 2011). En el estudio, se analizó entrevistas abiertas realizadas con los participantes utilizando el marco de codificación de Saldaña (2016). Los hallazgos sugieren que este compromiso puede estar influenciado por las prácticas pedagógicas de los docentes, las relaciones dentro de las comunidades de práctica que los docentes crean y los imaginarios e identidades de cada estudiante. Analizamos las implicaciones para los profesores de idiomas, los centros o institutos de idiomas y los programas de formación docente.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje de lenguas adicionales, comunidades de aprendices, identidad, compromiso, profesores en formación

Introduction

Of the 1.348 million speakers of English worldwide, only 379 million are native speakers (Statista Research Department, 2021), demonstrating the great quantity of people learning English as an Additional Language (EAL)[5]. This implies a multitude of reasons why people commit to learn EAL and could be an indication that not all potential EAL learners become proficient in English. It also raises the question of why some individuals pursue their language learning journey while others do not see it through to fruition. Scholarship has pointed out the impact of learners' motivation (Bećirović, 2017; Ghavamnia & Kashkouli, 2022; Rose *et al* ., 2020), anxiety and aptitude (Henter, 2014), and classroom environment (Ghonsooly *et al* ., 2017) on their proficiency and learning. Ghonsooly *et al* . (2017) also referred to low self-confidence and negative attitudes toward the additional language as part of demotivating factors.

Psycholinguistic theorists especially have emphasized the role of motivation in language learning, explaining that the learner's motivation is a key factor in succeeding or failing to learn the additional language. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) maintained that "motivation is responsible for *why* people decide to do something, *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity, [and] *how hard* they are going to pursue it" (p. 4). This lens conceptualizes language learning as an individual and internal process and, as such, it is problematic because it positions learners as solely responsible for their learning.

Our view of language learning draws upon sociocultural and sociolinguistic perspectives and considers that language learning is also influenced by external aspects. Therefore, instead of placing exclusive responsibility on students for their language learning, we argue that students' imagined selves along with teachers' pedagogical practices and the learning communities they create impact students' investment in additional language learning. Darvin and Norton (2021) refer to investment in terms of the stories, lived experiences, and social practices that shape language learning. Understanding that positioning learners alone as responsible for their learning is problematic, this study analyzed data from interviews with seven EAL learners to answer the following question: What aspects influence Colombian students to invest in learning English as an additional language?

Although Colombia ranked 17th out of 20 countries in the Latin American region according to the Education First English Proficiency Index (2021), the index also revealed that globally Colombia ranked 81st out of 112 countries, with a "low" overall English proficiency level. Despite the efforts of the Colombian government to promote EAL as exemplified by the creation of a National Program for Bilingualism, between 2004 and 2019 (see also Colombia Very Well, 2015-2025), most students performed at a lower level compared to the objectives of the Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN) (Enciso *et al* ., 2021). These rankings and English proficiency levels underscore the rationale for examining what influences the investment (or lack thereof) of Colombian learners of English as an additional language.

Through this research, teachers are reminded of the communities of practice they establish in their classrooms, where interaction and collective learning between teachers and students lead to enhance students' linguistic competencies. They are also reminded that their pedagogical practices have an impact on learners' investment. Additionally, teachers' pedagogies have the potential to influence students' perceptions of additional languages. Students and teachers can increase awareness of their shared responsibility in student language learning, avoiding placing sole blame on students alone in cases of potential failure. As such, this study can also be of interest to school administrators and policymakers as it provides context for supporting teachers to create learning environments that have potential to help students to learn the language successfully.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon the concept of investment as a theoretical framework (Darvin & Norton, 2015; 2017; 2021). Theorizing investment in language learning points to a shift away from psycholinguistic perspectives that emphasize the notion of learners' motivation. This concept in additional language learning conveys a message of learners'

5 We use the term additional language to refer to the learning of any new language in either the foreign or second language context. This perspective values Indigenous languages and how in the Colombian context, for example, Spanish can be considered an additional language for Indigenous students. As such, in this context, our use of additional language refers to the learning of EFL.

commitment to learning an additional language when they imagine or realize the potential benefits, opportunities, or possibilities related to learning the additional language (Darvin & Norton, 2017). As such, investment refers to actions that learners take as a result of the imagined 'selves' that they construct.

Darvin and Norton (2021) elucidate that "learners invest in a L2 because they hope it will provide a wider range of material and symbolic resources that increase the value of their cultural capital and social power" (p. 3). They argue that regardless of their levels of motivation, learners may not invest in practices intended to improve their proficiency in additional languages if they feel marginalized in the classroom or other community contexts. The concept of investment also highlights the relationships that learners build with the additional language and their willingness to practice and learn the language (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 2013; Schmid, 2022; see also Posada, 2018). By understanding the importance of certain language practices and setting achievable goals, learners may invest in such practices.

A substantial quantity of academic literature has pointed out the importance of investment and identity and how they relate to the experience of learning an additional language (Darvin & Norton, 2015; 2017; Norton & De Costa, 2018; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Norton's (2013; 2016) analyses of language and identity have culminated in discussions that have centered around three constructs (i.e., identity, investment, and imagined communities) and that help conceptualize language learning as a social practice during which learners construct and reconstruct their identities. Norton (2013) refers to identity in terms of "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 4). This view of identity takes into account the learning context and learners' imagined selves and communities. The concepts of identity and investment are particularly relevant to the experience of additional language learning as it is an experience influenced by internal and external factors and it involves cognitive, emotional, and social factors that all play an important role in what learners do or do not do. As Darvin and Norton (2021) elucidated, these concepts help provide "answers to the question of why individuals commit to learning an L2" (p. 9). Given that identities are complex, multiple, and context-based (Darvin & Norton, 2017), they influence language learning as students can feel motivated but not invested in learning due to a variety of aspects, including the atmosphere in the classroom or the kind of community that the teacher creates within the classroom. Therefore, in addition to understanding the role of students' investment and identities in the language learning process, it is important to address the kinds of communities that teachers build.

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice (CoP) refer to "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). They are a central concept in language learning as they highlight the relevance of learning through social participation. CoP theorists also view learning as social practice and emphasize the interrelationship between learning, social participation, and identities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; 2011). They contend that a sense of belonging to a specific group matters to all learners. When learners feel that they belong, they participate and invest in what they do.

Pate *et al* . (2019) contend that when students are involved and participate actively in a community of practice, it can lead to increased academic success and involvement in their studies. Drawing on Lave and Wenger (1991), Boylan (2017) discussed that communities of practice often have shared knowledge and shared knowing as two similar features. Because communities of practice may be complex, different factors need to be considered to build effective classroom environments. Such aspects may include teachers' deeds related to students' responses, learning environment, or physical environment. Kiatkheeree (2018) pointed to teacher reflection as an important tool to consider in the teaching and learning process. Reflective practices may provide teachers with opportunities to develop professionally and provide better learning communities for students.

Methodology

This qualitative case study investigated aspects that influence investment in learning an additional language. As aspects that influence the learning process may vary for each individual, a case study can accurately provide insight

into the position of different individuals (Yin, 2015). Ebneyamini *et al* . (2018) contend that case studies are also appropriate and beneficial as researchers may have the opportunity to study different aspects of language learning, contrast and explore them in relation to each other, and observe their development inside their environment.

Settings and Participants

It is important to acknowledge participants' experiences as they provide specific information necessary to achieve the research purpose (Benjumea, 2015). This study was conducted with undergraduate students (i.e., pre-service teachers), enrolled in a five-year-long pre-service teacher preparation program (i.e., 10 semesters) at an accredited state-funded university in Colombia. The program seeks to prepare future teachers with pedagogical and research knowledge to transform English teaching with actions that address the social and cultural realities of the country.

Participants were between 20 and 25 years old. Given the emphasis on their extended language learning experiences, only students in their final two semesters (i.e., 9th, and 10th semesters) were invited to participate (see Table 1). This group constituted a rich pool of participants because all had completed their mandatory courses and field experiences.

Table 1. *Participants' Information*

Participant	Gender	Semester
Bibiana	F	10
Martina	F	10
Tim	M	9
Pauline	F	10
Reavix	M	10
Shadow	M	10
Mariah	F	10

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study came from a larger intervention-based action research study that explored the experiences of 20 EFL pre-service teachers in learning English before and during college, as well as in learning to become teachers (N= 12 women, 8 men). In the larger study, we also designed and implemented co-curricular activities for participants (see Kaya & Olaya, 2024). For the purpose of this article, we selected seven focal participants whose interview transcripts offered richer data to examine their experiences and what influenced their investment (or lack of investment) in different learning communities (e.g., K-11 context, language institutes, teacher preparation program). Harrell and Bradley (2009) argue that interviews constitute one of the main information-gathering techniques to collect data from individuals' previous or current practices, thoughts, views, or experiences. We conducted open-ended interviews during which participants discussed their experiences learning English both before and during their university program, highlighting easy and difficult aspects of their journey. For instance, we asked: (a) Tell us about your experiences learning English before starting the university and your experiences learning English at the university, and (b) Why did you decide to become a teacher of English? Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes.

We transcribed the interviews and used the transcripts for data analysis. We analyzed data using Saldaña's (2016) coding framework through different cycles. First, we examined the transcripts and highlighted the most relevant information from the excerpts as codes. Subsequently, we reviewed and consolidated similar codes to form overarching categories. The main themes that we discuss in the next section emerged from our synthesis of the categories as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. *Coding Process Sample*

Excerpts	Codes	Categories	Theme
Why did you get interested in learning English? "Okay, I think it's a long story but I'm going to say the short part. I was in school, in 11th grade, and I hated English. I didn't have good teachers, but I started taking classes in an institute, and the methodology helped me to love the English language. About my experience before the university as I said before in the school it was not so good, it was really bad actually. After that, at the university I think the methodology was good.	**I was in school, in 11th grade, and I hated English.** *In an institute, and the methodology helped me to love the English language.* **In the school it was not so good.** *At the university I think the methodology was good*	**Learning in school** *Learning in language institutes* *Learning at the university*	Communities of practice

Findings

Different aspects affect the extent to which learners invest (or not) in the process of learning additional languages. Three main themes emerged from our analysis: teachers' ways of knowing, doing/teaching, and being; learning communities; and students' imagined selves and identities as language learners. Before delving into these themes, we observed that participants' motivations for becoming English teachers included multiple reasons. This is "interesting" given the types of undesired experiences these individuals had as K-11 students.

Teachers' Ways of Knowing, Doing/Teaching, and Being

Teachers' practices, encompassing their ways of knowing and doing, have the potential to positively influence students' language learning processes and attitudes toward the language. When discussing what makes learners engage or disengage with additional language learning, Bibiana referred to the abilities of teachers to create classroom environments conducive to learning. She remarked, "It depends on the teacher because some teachers make me enjoy the classes but the other ones make me hate it." Bibiana elaborated on the impact of teachers' ways of teaching, pointing out that "the way they teach" played a significant role in her learning process. From Bibiana's experiences and perspective, teachers' methodologies are pivotal in influencing whether learners become interested or uninterested in a subject in general and English as an additional language specifically.

Other participants also emphasized these ways of teaching as a crucial component of what made them view teachers as effective or ineffective. Reavix referred to a teacher who knew and implemented communicative language teaching as someone who had a big influence on his investment during his language learning journey. He stated:

> The teacher would get me talking, she would get me interacting with the students to use the language more than anything else and then I became very interested in English and there were activities that I personally liked and that compelled me to learn the language[6].

Reavix also referred to a different teacher whose instruction seemed too basic, "mechanical," and "grammar-based." As a result, Reavix and his classmates showed no interest in engaging in classroom practices, and they viewed the teacher as ineffective for not helping any student invest in learning English. Therefore, teachers' ways of doing or teaching can also negatively influence students' learning and their perceptions of their teachers and the language.

Another element that affected students' learning and investment was the strictness of some teachers who ignored and did not consider students' learning styles. Bibiana "didn't like" when some of her teachers were "so strict and rude." Shadow shared a similar encounter with strict teachers, describing it as "an experience with a teacher that was a pain in the neck." Shadow described himself as a learner who enjoyed being relaxed and multitasking while paying attention to the teacher. His teacher, however, had a different perspective:

6 We translated this excerpt from Spanish into English for non-Spanish speaker readers.

Ortega, P. F., Hernandez, M. A., Kaya, J. and Olaya, A. (2024) • Colomb. Appl. Linguist. J.
Printed ISSN 0123-4641 Online ISSN 2248-7085 • July - December 2024. Vol. 26 • Issue 2 pp. 22-34.

> I was so relaxed you know, I was like in class and I was doing other things. The teacher thought that I was not paying attention. I was learning in my own way. She wanted me like that being focused [kind of] paying attention, looking at her, and I'm not in that way. So, we argued many times.

The excerpt above highlights the importance of heeding students' ways of learning and calls for teachers to revisit their ways of teaching/doing. Mariah spoke of the importance for teachers to put themselves in their students' shoes and ask themselves: "Is the way I'm teaching easy for them [students] to understand?" Effective teachers, from Mariah's perspective, "have to reflect," "recognize that a student is a person with feelings, with a social background, with some difficulties, and that he or she is a person who needs to be heard." She added that effective teachers need to constantly position themselves as learners. Through such positioning, teachers can relate to students' experiences and build stronger relationships with students to better connect with and support them.

The lack of constant reflective practices among all teachers may result in exposing students to a variety of contrasting experiences, as were Reavix's. Like Reavix, Bibiana navigated her English studies through contrasting experiences which demonstrated how teachers' ways of being impact not only student learning and perceptions but also their investment. Reflecting on her positive experience, Bibiana shared how much she learned from teachers who cared and how she, in return, "loved [her] teachers" because "the majority of them were so good with me," indicating how their ways of being and a pedagogy of care can create positive long-lasting effects in addition to a bond between students and teachers. Yet, Bibiana also complained about a few teachers whose ways of being misaligned with qualities of caring and democratic teachers.

As shown, teachers' ways of knowing, doing/teaching, and being impact learners in a variety of ways. Next, we show how the kinds of learning environments that teachers create also have an influence on learning and learners.

Learning Communities

The contexts where students find themselves when learning additional languages play an important role, either facilitating or hindering their development. Most participants shared that during school it was difficult to learn or have an optimistic view towards English classes due to the kind of learning environments and teachers' approaches. Martina highlighted, "at school it was like the same thing; it was so repetitive, and we learned about the verb to be and some vocabulary, but it was the same each year." However, when Martina changed learning contexts, she noted a shift in her interest in the additional language, expressing how she loved the new contexts better.

First, "at the language center of the university" where she "did two levels … and had the opportunity to apply our skills and to talk with our partners, to do some different things." Second, Martina described her experience at the university as being "great" because course instructors offered opportunities to engage students in authentic communication. Other participants also pointed out the impact of different learning environments on their learning commitment and awareness of their English proficiency. For instance, Bibiana recalled, "when I was in school, in 11th grade, I hated English. I didn't have good teachers, but I started taking classes in an institute that is called WISE, and the methodology helped me to love the English language." Bibiana's experiences speak not only to the effectiveness of teachers as presented above, but also to the role that learning contexts play.

Participants highlighted the contrast they noted between their learning experience in the public K-11 context and in language institutes and university, noting how different contexts impacted their investment. Tim shared how he decided to disengage from English classrooms during his K-11 education, as "those learnings were [solely] focused on obtaining a grade", and the learning content appeared basic. Similarly, Shadow disapproved of the K-11 learning contexts because schoolteachers employed methodologies in which they presented only basic content and relied upon students "just doing exercises" without engaging in communicative practices. Conversely, Shadow actively engaged in learning English at a language institute as "it was like tutoring because there were a few people and the opportunity to go and ask questions." Studying in contexts that offered no communicative practices in English impacted students' experiences in university.

A number of participants expressed the difficulty in navigating the language demands in English classrooms during their early semesters in the higher education learning contexts: "It was challenging because, as I told you before, I didn't know anything in English when I graduated from high school and then at university the level was too high" (Pauline). Similarly, Reavix recalled starting with low proficiency in English and finding the initial semesters at the university difficult: "The first semester was very, very, tough for me. I mean, it was very complicated for me because I had come from my high school education". Reavix further emphasized, "it was a total shock for me because when I arrived, on the first day of college, I had a new class, and the first class was English, and the teacher arrived speaking completely in English". These experiences suggest the need to create engaging learning communities in elementary/ secondary grades to prepare students for later learning experiences. Such communities can be conceptualized as safe spaces that offer opportunities for interactions but may also require students to be brave given potential linguistic insecurities.

Spaces and opportunities to practice and use language in real life contexts are amongst the key aspects for creating successful learning experiences. Pauline referred to the constraint of not having spaces within which to practice, even at the post-secondary level, expressing that "we didn't have enough spaces to talk in English, like, maybe just in the classroom. And once we [were] out of university, like, we didn't have those spaces to talk with somebody else." For aspiring teachers of additional languages in particular, it is crucial to provide learning environments where these future teachers can communicate and practice.

Imagined identities and Investment in Language Learning

We found that participants as learners and future teachers of EAL were highly invested in learning and at some point, improving their English. In many cases, their investment seemed to be triggered by their goals, but the way they envisioned themselves played a crucial role in their commitment to learning EAL: "I think that English does open the doors you want" (Pauline). Imagining their future selves contributed to their investment; students envisioned opportunities in different sectors. As Tim expressed, "I think that studying English is a bank of opportunities." These opportunities include financial, professional, and socio-cultural factors. In addition, students' narratives showed how they perceived English as a tool that would give them the opportunity to change or improve their financial circumstances.

In the Colombian context, high proficiency in the English language may facilitate access to a wider range of jobs, career advancement, and entrepreneurial or business opportunities, which imply better and higher income. Students in this study identified the economic benefit in promotions within their jobs, wage raises, long-term and more beneficial contracts, and working abroad, among others. For instance, Mariah said, "we want to learn English because, well, globalization, because it is important for business." It is evident that she perceived it as an economic advantage. Another student also saw the benefit of EAL in improving current situations in people's lives: "It might help other people, yes, maybe finding better opportunities. You know the trend nowadays is to go to the States or any other country rather than Latin America because the situation is not good" (Shadow). Most pre-service teachers were aware of a variety of opportunities that come with learning EAL, which triggered their investment in learning English.

One shared trait in pre-service teachers that increased their investment in learning or improving their English as an additional language was the conception of the English language as a vehicle for understanding the entertainment world. Students in this study liked listening to music, watching series, movies, and sports, and playing games in English. This conceived preference allowed them to communicate and understand the world from different perspectives. Mariah conceptualized learning English as "a bridge to get involved with other cultures and get involved with my favorite actress at the time when I was a teenager." She added that she "saw it like a tool to understand other words [in] music, interviews, [and] movies." Similarly, Bibiana emphasized that:

I got interested because the culture and the way they taught me made me interested in the language and the culture and the different cultures of the language, not only [the] United States; also [the] United Kingdom, some parts of Africa, Europe, etc. and open my view to the world.

These excerpts show how learners perceived English as an avenue for acquiring a broader picture of the world outside their own context, in which they may feel a certain degree of discomfort or boredom, allowing them to find new things they are interested in. By means of English, they might gain the ability to communicate with people from different cultures.

Additionally, international academic exchange for scholarly purposes has become a more common and desired objective in most of the students' academic life. This objective could be achieved easily by owning the ability to use and understand an additional language, as stated by Tim and Pauline, respectively: "I decided to study English to grow and to grow myself as a professional and to get more opportunities in the future, basically for that," and "I got interested to learn English, like, um, because of some common reasons like everyone [is] interested because of career development and all the possibilities that you have once you learn a new language, right?" New languages open different possibilities for students to expand their horizons and study in other countries. For example, many scholarships and exchange programs require a certain level of English proficiency.

The opportunity to use English in real life contexts surfaced substantially as one of the main factors impelling students to invest in learning and improving their language skills, especially with regard to traveling to other countries and being able to communicate accurately in the additional language. Pauline explained that "every person should learn, like, a touristy language," referring to the ability to speak as straightforwardly and fluently as possible and be understood in different contexts. Tim described this idea when he stated that "the language in use is based on being able to use the language in various contexts, such as working or socially when you travel abroad." Therefore, the socio-communicative aspect of the additional language plays a key role in the language learning process as one of the triggers of investment for learners and as one of their objectives.

Discussion

Multiple aspects, including teachers' pedagogical practices (e.g., their ways of teaching/doing and being), the learning communities fostered by teachers, and students' imagined identities or selves impact students' investment in learning additional languages. Participants in this study shared various practices that either engaged or disengaged them with teachers and the learning of English as an additional language. Teachers' pedagogical practices influence student learning, engagement, and achievement in different subjects (Basque & Bouchamma, 2016; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Faragher & Van Ommen, 2017). Reeves (2020) explains that some leaders and teachers "don't know how their practices influence [student] achievement" and how others adopt the blame-the-victim mentality, positioning students as being responsible for any potential failure (p. 4). Reeves reminds us that "Nobody chooses to fail" (p. 6). Instead, he encourages teachers to closely examine student data and performance, and to reassess their own pedagogical practices in order to facilitate and support student learning.

Among teachers' practices that students criticized were teachers' inattention and lack of consideration for students' learning styles. To facilitate student learning, teachers can capitalize on students' learning styles (Dunn & Honigsfel, 2013; Nash, 2014; Newton & Miah, 2017; Pashler *et al* ., 2008). Dunn and Honigsfel (2013) underscored that "to prevent academic failure, identification of students' learning style strengths will lead to the use of differentiated instruction by capitalizing on varied learner needs" (p. 230). This practice is particularly crucial in the field of additional language learning and teaching.

A co-requisite for teachers who attend to learners' styles and utilize differentiated instruction among other practices is their dedication to creating rich, engaging, and safe learning environments. Nash (2014) discusses that classroom environments that "click" do not just happen; teachers need to lay the groundwork to create procedures and routines. Such procedures and routines need to include and empower students to transform classrooms into communities of practice where teachers and students co-construct knowledge. As such, learning environments also take into account elements such as teacher-student relationships, as well as social, emotional, and organizational factors (Abi, 2019; Agarwal & Krishan, 2014; Carrillo, 2020; Hoff, 2006). These factors have the potential to affect the quality of students and teachers' actions that may (or not) facilitate the achievement of linguistic goals.

Throughout this research, it was evidenced that the importance of spaces to practice and to use language in real context is an essential aspect for a successful language learning development. The absence of spaces for practicing the target language made learners feel that their learning was useless or lacked real-world application. Inada (2021) found that students claimed that if they constantly relied on Japanese as L1, their improvement in English would not be seen because they would not have the opportunity to practice it. Furthermore, Willis (1981, as cited in Inada, 2021) suggested that only using the target language (TL) would allow the students to subconsciously practice their language skills, promoting thinking in the TL and reducing interference from their first language.

As discussed, students invested in learning the English language given the potential benefits it could bring to their lives. In the process, they negotiated their identities within different learning communities. Such negotiation shaped the ways they constructed their imagined identities. Anderson (1991, as cited in Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) argued that language learners' actual and desired memberships in "imagined communities" affect their learning trajectories (p. 669). Norton (2000) discussed the same concepts, arguing that if a learner envisions "an imagined identity within the context of an imagined community" this process "can impact a learner's engagement with educational practices" (p. 246). Students in our study explained that achieving higher proficiency in English was linked to envisioning themselves in improved financial situations, better career prospects and better cultural connections if they reached a higher proficiency level. In the field of language learning, this may be labeled as an instrumental motivation because of the relation with material means. However, it goes beyond instrumental motivation as investment contemplates the relationship between the learners' desires and the changing social world (Lee, 2014).

Bacon and Kaya (2018) explained that English language learners' "actual and desired memberships in imagined communities affect their learning trajectories, influencing their agency, motivation, investment, and resistance in the learning of English" (p. 659). Students who participated in this study imagined themselves in new communities, which appeared as a reward for learning and achieving proficiency in English. Therefore, students understand the importance of language learning in terms of their role in that world. In other words, the way students see themselves within a community is a powerful reason for them to increase their willingness to learn the language. This conclusion provides insight into the reasons why students may not engage. In this regard, Norton (2000) argued that students' non-participation in specific language practices can be attributed to their investment in particular imagined communities and their access (or lack thereof) to these communities. Teachers should reflect upon their role in continuously encouraging students throughout their career and empowering them to reflect and strengthen their own reasons to learn the language.

Implications

Teachers' ways of knowing, doing, and being impact students' language learning processes and attitudes toward the language. Cents-Boonstra *et al* . (2020), for example, found distinct relations between motivating teaching behaviors and student engagement, underscoring the importance for teachers to reshape their pedagogical practices. One way for teachers to enhance their practices is to start with assessing students' needs and expectations as these can inform their planning and delivery of instruction. Teachers can also constantly reflect on their teaching methodologies or approaches to identify what works for students in different contexts. Given that teachers' practices are influenced by their preparation, it is also important for teacher preparation programs to help future teachers develop the necessary professional dispositions and knowledge and prepare them in adopting reflective practices as an ongoing process in teacher development. Also, policymakers need to support school administrators to offer professional development on investment for in-service teachers.

In learning communities, the environment in which students learn and develop their skills is essential to enhance the degree to which they feel comfortable and safe in using the target language with others. These spaces could bring positive perceptions towards the language and the process of learning it. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of the environments they create and promote to ensure they are beneficial to learners. Being good listeners, caring, and flexible in accommodating students' processes and learning styles could help promote their strengths. Additionally, providing spaces for students to use the language in real contexts would give the possibility to notice the growth of their skills and notice the application of their knowledge in real situations.

Teachers should provide classroom environments that do not value competition but encourage collaborative learning. Also, these efforts need to be supported by teachers knowing how and when to correct students, embracing their errors as part of their learning process and not as a constraint instead of treating them with rudeness and negative behaviors. These actions would also teach the students how to react to their and others language mistakes. As a result, they may promote a positive learning and practicing environment among them.

In this study, we underscored the importance of the concept of identity, as language learners always enact a variety of identities when learning additional languages (Bacon & Kaya, 2018; Norton, 2015). Identity is an essential concept in additional language learning. Teachers and students could exercise their individual agency which is part of their identities to resist, negotiate, change, and transform themselves and their environment, including the classrooms, to find the most effective strategies for positive learning outcomes (Sung, 2019). Therefore, as facilitators, language teachers have opportunities to help students invest in their learning. They can integrate students' knowledge, local cultures, and daily practices into their pedagogies. Finally, understanding and knowing students may allow teachers to capitalize on their strengths using the appropriate tools and strategies.

Further exploration into other aspects that impact students' investment in the language learning process is crucial, both within and beyond the classroom. For instance, to what extent do students' relationships with their classmates hinder or boost their investment? How does the contact that students have with the language in their free-time activities and through social media impact their willingness to learn the language? How do the national discourses urging educational institutions to prepare students for international exams impact (or do not impact) students' investment in the English language?

Conclusion

In this article, we drew upon Darvin and Norton's (2015, 2017) notion of investment to argue against psycholinguistic theories that overly emphasize the role of motivation in language learning, portraying learners as mainly responsible for their language learning. Motivation-focused perspectives fail to consider other aspects affecting learning. Darvin and Norton's (2015) argue that adopting an investment perspective helps demonstrate the shared responsibility between learners and teachers in the learning process. We analyzed interview data from seven EFL pre-service teachers and identified aspects that influenced their language learning before and during college. Our analysis showed that teachers' pedagogical practices, along with the learning communities that they create and students' imagined selves, impact students' investment in learning additional languages. It also showed that the context of learning and relationships within these communities impact learners' engagement.

As supported by the investment perspective, student investment in language learning is dependent upon a variety of aspects. These include the teachers' responsibility to create nurturing and safe learning contexts and relationships and discuss desirable imagined communities for the learner. Expecting students to be motivated, without considering the investment perspective in language learning is doing a disservice to learners. Therefore, we encourage teachers to adopt pedagogical practices that create contexts for all students to invest in learning additional languages. As countries worldwide increasingly adopt policies that value and support multilingual practices, it becomes imperative to prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to integrate pedagogies that raise their awareness of the shared responsibility to support students' language learning.

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