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Pakistani ESL Learners on the Internet: Explorations into Factors Influencing their Online Language Learning Behaviour

Abstract:

The present research explores Pakistani ESL learners' voluntary language learning behaviour. It excludes references to ubiquitous and almost rampant online teaching-learning behaviour caused by the recent global pandemic—COVID-19. A questionnaire containing closed-ended questions was used to collect the data. Cronbach's Alpha test was used to check the reliability of the questionnaire, whereas the validity of the questionnaire was examined by using the Item-Total Correlation Test and Inter-Item Correlation Test. A regression test was conducted to test the current research work hypotheses. Regression results suggest that the following factors urge the learners to benefit from the Internet to learn English. The data analysis and results reveal important information related to learner-psychology. (a) The attitude of Pakistani learners towards Internet-based language learning is positive. (b) The Internet's perceived usefulness urges Pakistani learners to learn English. (c) Learners can afford digital gadgets and money to buy Internet data.

Key Words:

ESL Learners, Internet, Online Language Learning Behaviour

Introduction

The Internet seems to have become a driver of change in the modern 'global village'. The use of the Internet has been increasing in every walk of life. Keeping in mind this scenario [Prensky \(2001a\)](#) calls the present generation of the Digital Age 'digital natives'. [Tapscott \(1998\)](#) names them as 'net-generation' because the modern generation spends most of its time in using the Internet on computers and smart phones. This is what we call 'screen-time'. Moreover, the outbreak of COVID-19 has considerably increased the trend of online education and it is estimated that the online education market will reach \$350 Billion by 2025 (Li & Lalani, 2020). So, the need of the time is to change our traditional language learning methodology and the Pakistani net-generation should benefit from the Internet for learning English. In this way, the learners will learn English from the source (i.e., the Internet) that they use most of the time. [Warschauer and Healey \(1998\)](#) acknowledge the importance of the Internet in the field of language learning and argue that the Internet and computer-mediated communication (CMC) have made revolutionary changes in the language learning scenario. [Lee \(2000\)](#) also supports the above-mentioned views and puts forward the following benefits of using the Internet for the development of English language skills. (a) A variety of authentic tasks are accessible on websites that offer real life language learning environment to the learners. (b) The Internet provides empirical/experiential learning environment. (c) Many resources of the Internet enhance achievement levels of the language learners. (d) The Internet gives autonomy to the language learners and they get motivated. (e) Immediate feedback is also provided by many Internet tools. Keeping in mind the above-mentioned discussion,

it can be said that the Internet is a very valuable source of learning English. Researches in different countries have supported the afore-mentioned viewpoint. [Chiu et al. \(2007\)](#) are of the view that web online learning seems to improve speaking skills of the learners in Taiwan. [Baleghizadeh and Oladrostam \(2010\)](#) say that

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online learning proved useful for learning English grammar in Iran. Han and Keskin (2016) conclude that the Internet tools are very beneficial in learning English speaking skills in Turkey. [Khalaf's \(2018\)](#) research also found the Internet as a useful tool for learning English in Kuwait. [Bashori et al. \(2020\)](#) conclude that the Internet resources have proved to be useful for decreasing English language speaking anxiety in Indonesia. Thus, the Internet has proved to be useful for learning English in many countries. The need of hour is that maximum English language learners in Pakistan should also benefit from the Internet and use this beneficial tool to learn English but in Pakistan, a small number of learners have adopted the Internet for learning English. It is because of the absence of some factors that stimulate the Pakistani language learners to learn English with the help of the Internet. There is a need to explore those factors that shape the learners' intentions to accept and use the Internet as a tool for learning English. The present research investigates the afore-mentioned aspects and tries to explore different determinants/reasons which shape the learners' intentions to learn English with the help of the Internet. Technology acceptance theories help the researchers to identify those determinants. These technology acceptance theories have been discussed in literature review of the present study.

Review of Literature

Technology acceptance theories provide the theoretical framework of the study. Taking into account the current research, it can be argued that these technology acceptance theories help the researchers in finding the factors that stimulate a learner to adopt the Internet for learning English language.

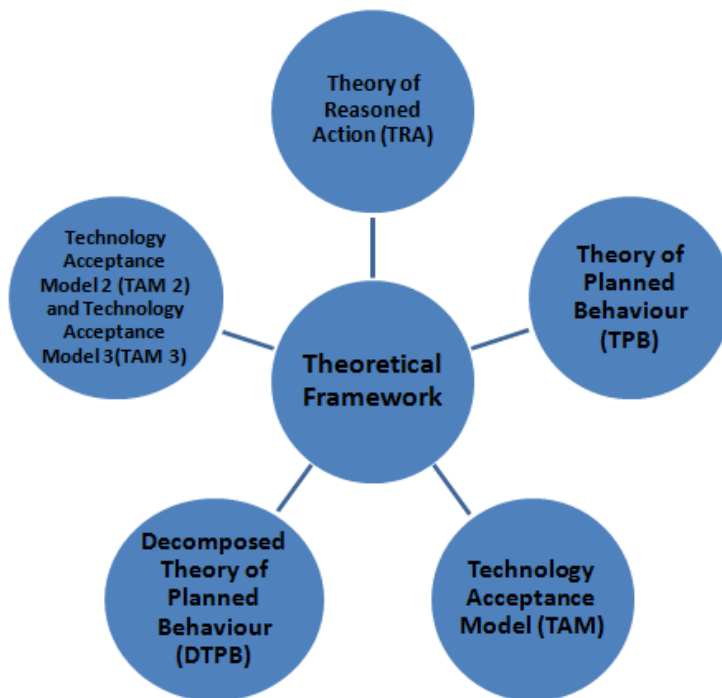


Figure 1:

Theoretical Framework

The above-mentioned theories form the backbone of works associated with attitude-behavior relationship and technology acceptance. The theories have been discussed below.

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

This theory was introduced by [Ajzen and Fishbein in 1980](#). The Theory has its origin from the social psychology and it tries to identify the determinant factors that control the consciously intentional behavior. According to this theory attitude (A) and subjective norm (SN) i.e. social influence are the core determinants that control individual's behavioral intention (BI) ([Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980](#)). As figure 2 suggests, a person's beliefs and his or her evaluation of a particular technology control his/her attitude, whereas individual's normative beliefs and motivation have a deep effect on subjective norm (SN) of that person. Taking into consideration the present study, it can be fairly argued that subjective norm (SN) and attitude (A) are the key determinants that stimulate learners to use online web resources for learning English. The blueprint of TRA is given below.

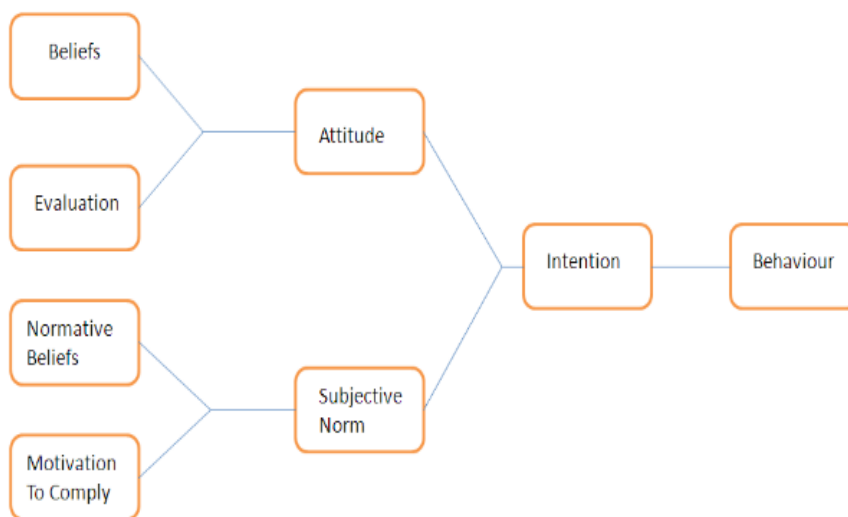


Figure 2: Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

TRA is not the one and only theory that helps in finding the factors that urge the learners to learn English with the help of the Internet; Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) can also be helpful for this research. Theory of Planned Behaviour is discussed below.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen proposed this theory in 1985. The crux of the theory lies in beliefs of three kinds: behavioral beliefs, normative belief and control beliefs, which keeping in mind the current study, urge learners' behavioral intention to use the Internet to learn English. Behavioural beliefs formulate positive or negative attitude of the learners regarding Internet based language learning. Normative beliefs deal with social influence on the learners to use Internet for learning English. Controlled beliefs refer to perceived behavioral control. It means the presence of different determinants such as Internet connection, individual's ability of using the Internet for learning English etc. So, these three determinants urge the learners either accept or deny internet base English language learning. The schematic representation of TPB is given below.

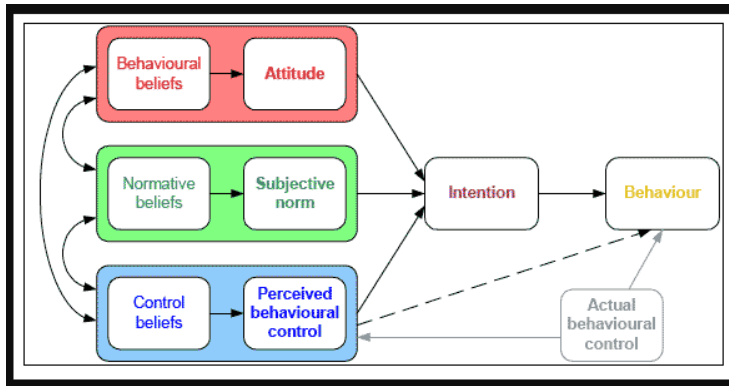


Figure 3: Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Apart from TPB, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is also useful for this study.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Davis put forward Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in 1989. TAM is used to predict the determinants that control users’ acceptance of a technology. As the schematic representation of TAM shows, behavioral intention (BI) of an individual to accept a certain technology is directly controlled by two main constructs: attitude (A) and perceived usefulness (PU).

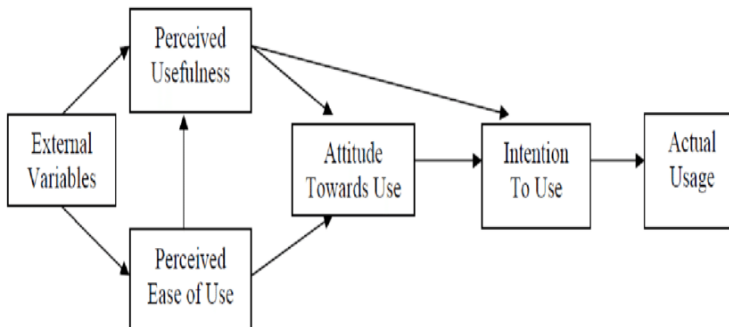


Figure 4: Technology Acceptance Model

Moreover, perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) are the constructs that control attitude (A) of an individual and certain external factors influence both PU and PEOU. Taking into account the present study, it can be said that A and PU stimulate the learners of English to use the Internet resources for learning English. The key definitions of the constructs of TAM are discussed below.

Perceived Usefulness (PU): The degree to which learners believe that using a particular technology would improve their learning performance. It means that if the learners perceive that the Internet will improve their language learning performance, their chances of using the Internet for learning English would be high.

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU): The degree to which learners consider that using a specific technology for a specific purpose would be easy to use. Taking into account the present study it can be said that if the learners believe that using the Internet for English language learning is easy, they are more likely to adopt the Internet based language learning.

External Variables: The external variables may include learners' efficiency in using technology i.e. the Internet and social influence such as motivation from friends and teachers to learn English with the help of the Internet.

Attitude (A): It refers to individuals' positive or negative feelings towards particular technology. If the learners have positive attitude towards the Internet based language learning, their chances of using the Internet for learning English would be high.

Behavioural intention (BI): It refers to the learners' intention to use a technology. It is directly connected to learners' actual behavior.

Decomposed Theory of Planned Behavior (DTPB)

In 1995, Taylor and Todd introduced this theory as an elaborated version of previously mentioned TPB. The schematic representation of TPB is given below in figure 4.

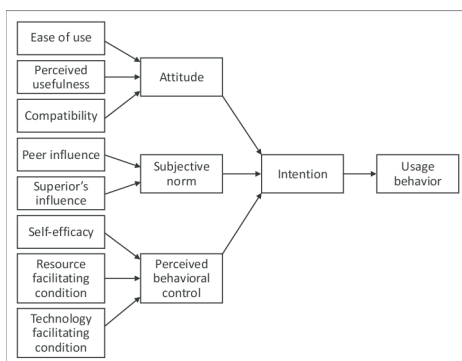


Figure 5: Decomposed Theory of Planned Behavior (DTPB)

The schematic representation of this theory shows that attitude (A), subjective norm (SN) and perceived behavioral control (PBC) are the three core constructs that directly influence behavioral intention (BI) of the learners to accept and use a technology (Taylor & Todd, 1995). It can be argued that the three factors A, SN and PBC stimulate the respondents to use Web resources to learn English. All the three factors are decomposed into different other constructs.

(A) Attitude is decomposed into following constructs.

Perceived Usefulness (PU): The degree to which learners believe that using a particular technology would improve their learning performance. It means that if the learners perceive that the Internet will improve their language learning performance, their chances of using the Internet for learning English would be high.

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU): The degree to which learners consider that using a specific technology for a specific purpose would be easy to use. Taking into account the present study it can be said that if the learners believe that using the Internet for English language learning is easy, they are more likely to adopt the Internet based language learning.

Compatibility (C): The degree of compatibility of the Internet with the existing needs and values.

(B) Keeping in mind the current study, subjective norm (SN) refers to the social influence or the influence of colleagues, friends and teachers on learners' acceptance of the Internet for learning English. SN is regulated by superiors' and peers' influences.

Superiors' Influence: It refers to the extent to which a learner thinks that his or her higher-ups want him to learn English with the help of the Internet.

Peer Influence: It refers to the extent a person thinks that his or her peers want him/her to learn English with the help of the Internet.

(C) Perceived behavioural control (PBC) is the next core construct of the theory under discussion. It refers to the learners’ beliefs and perceptions of internal and external constraints that may debilitate or facilitate the behavior. PBC is regulated by the following factors.

Self-efficacy: It refers to degree of individual’s proficiency in using the Internet for English language learning.

Resources Facilitating Conditions: It refers to the degree of availability of resources such as money to buy required technology and availability of experts who teach how to use technology for the required purpose.

Technology Facilitating Conditions: They include such factors as the availability of computer, laptop, Internet connection etc. for English language learning.

The bottom line, as shown in figure 5, illustrates that learners’ improved behavioural control, better subjective norm and positive attitude strongly influence learners’ behavioural intention to learn English with the help of the Internet.

Technology Acceptance Model 2 (TAM2) and Technology Acceptance Model 3 (TAM3)

Venkatesh and Davis presented TAM 2 in 2000, whereas TAM 3 was proposed by Venkatesh and Bala in 2008. Both TAM 2 and TAM 3 identify perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) as the main factors that stimulate individuals to use a particular technology. Taking into consideration the current research, the researchers can argue that PU and PEOU are the prominent factors that urge the learners to use the online resources of the Internet for learning English. Figure 5 represents both the models in a detailed manner.

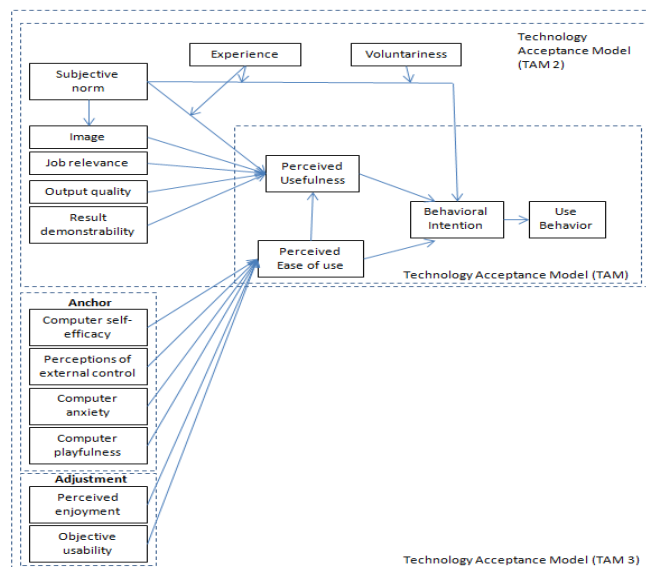


Figure 6: Technology Acceptance Models 2 and 3

Research Model and Research Hypotheses

The afore-mentioned technology acceptance theories identify the following five substantial factors/ stimulants that urge the learners to learn English with the help of the Internet: perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), subjective norm (SN), perceived behavioral control (PBC) and attitude (A). So, keeping in mind the above-mentioned factors, the researchers propose the following research model along with research hypotheses.

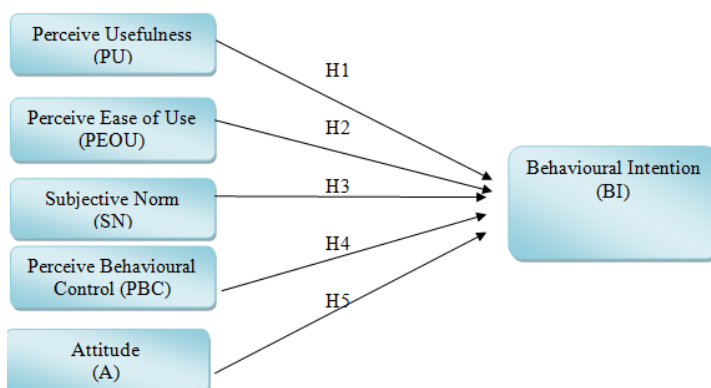


Figure 7: Research Model

Research Hypotheses are the following:

- H1:** Perceived usefulness (PU) will positively influence learners' behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning English.
- H2:** Perceived ease of use (PEOU) will positively influence learners' behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning English.
- H3:** Subjective norm (SN) will positively influence learners' behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning English.
- H4:** Perceived behavioral control (PBC) will positively influence learners' behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning English.
- H5:** Attitude (A) will positively influence learners' behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning.

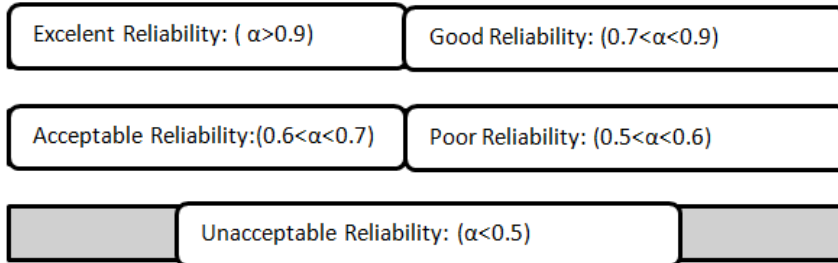
Research Method

The present study follows descriptive exploratory research design. Data collection tool was a questionnaire that was designed for the respondents to explore their opinions regarding learning English with the help of the Internet. Questionnaire had six sections and each section contained three closed-ended items. Five-point Likert scale was used in it. Only those learners of MA English who have been benefitting from the Internet for learning English were included as the population of the study. From their responses, inferences were made on what factors stimulated them to use the Internet for learning English. And these factors can equally be used to stimulate the future generations to learn English with the help of the Internet. Data was collected by using Simple Random Sampling technique and a total of 100 learners were used as a sample. Research Setting was district Layyah. Data collected from the questionnaire was coded and entered in SPSS for analysis. Cronbach's Alpha, Correlation and regression analysis were conducted for the analysis of the collected data.

Data Analysis

Reliability of the Questionnaire

A questionnaire is not good unless it is reliable. So, it was of paramount importance that the questionnaire should be reliable. [Trizano-Hermosilla and Alvarado \(2016\)](#) also support Cronbach's Alpha for estimating reliability of an instrument. They are of the view that the Cronbach's alpha test is widely used for testing internal reliability of an instrument. Thus the Cronbach's Alpha was conducted by using SPSS to check the reliability of the questionnaire. Moreover, [George and Mallery \(2003\)](#) and [Kline \(2000\)](#) propose the following criteria of Cronbach's Alpha test while estimating the reliability of an instrument:



Reliability of the questionnaire was checked by using SPSS. The table given below shows the reliability results of the current study.

Table 1. Summary of the Reliability Statistics

S. No	Constructs	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
1	Perceived Usefulness (PU)	3	0.832	Good
2	Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)	3	0.829	Good
3	Subjective Norm (SN)	3	0.751	Acceptable
4	Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	3	0.776	Acceptable
5	Attitude (At)	3	0.842	Good
6	Behavioural Intention (BI)	3	0.768	Acceptable

Table 1 shows that all the constructs have Cronbach's Alpha values more than 0.7 and hence all the constructs included in the questionnaire are reliable.

Validity

It is also not impossible for measuring tool to be reliable but not valid. So, the researchers, after ensuring reliability of the questionnaire, ensured validity of the questionnaire. The researchers maintained both face validity and construct validity. Face validity was maintained by asking the different research experts to check the questionnaire and give their suggestions to make the questionnaire valid. Construct validity was tested through SPSS. The researchers checked construct validity by doing correlation analysis. [Robinson et al. \(1991a\)](#) are of the view that construct validity can be checked by checking item-to-total correlation and inter-item correlation. They further maintain that item-total correlation of the constructs should exceed 0.50 and inter-item correlation of the constructs should exceed 0.30. Otherwise, the constructs would be considered not valid. The current study fulfills both criteria and thus has the construct validity. Table 2 shows that all the constructs of the questionnaire are valid.

Table 2. Summary of Validity Statistics

Constructs	Inter-Item Correlation Range (should exceed 0.3)	Remarks	Item to total Correlation Range (should exceed 0.5)	Remarks
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0.56-0.72	Valid	0.66-0.76	Valid
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	0.54-0.67	Valid	0.65-0.75	Valid
Subjective Norm (SN)	0.44-0.60	Valid	0.52-0.63	Valid
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	0.39-0.70	Valid	0.50-0.74	Valid
Attitude (A)	0.57-0.68	Valid	0.69-0.76	Valid
Behavioural Intention (BI)	0.46-0.71	Valid	0.50-0.68	Valid

Examination of the Proposed Hypotheses

The researchers used multiple regression analysis to examine the hypotheses. Regression is a group of statistical processes for investigating the relationships between different variables. The results of different independent variables (PU, PEOU, SN, PBC and A) on single dependent variable (BI) are given below.

Multiple Regression Results

Table 3. Examination of the Proposed Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Proposed Hypotheses	<i>P</i> should be < 0.05	B	Results
H1	Perceived Usefulness(PU) → Behavioural Intention (BI)	0.000 (<i>p</i> <0.05)	0.610	H1 Supported
H2	Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) → Behavioural Intention (BI)	0.974 (<i>p</i> >0.05)	0.002	H2 Rejected
H3	Subjective Norm (SN) → Behavioural Intention (BI)	0.025 (<i>p</i> <0.05)	0.144	H3 Supported
H4	Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) → Behavioural Intention (BI)	0.009 (<i>p</i> <0.05)	0.169	H4 Supported
H5	Attitude (A) → Behavioural Intention (BI)	0.000 (<i>p</i> <0.05)	0.262	H5 Supported

The above-mentioned table is discussed below. Every hypothesis is discussed in detail one by one in the following lines.

H1: Perceived usefulness (PU) will positively influence learners’ behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning English.

Table 3 illustrates that *p*-value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. It means that perceived usefulness (PU) significantly influences learners’ behavioral intention (BI) to learn English with the help of the Internet. The value of standardized coefficient (β = 0.610) of PU is largest among other variables. It means that PU is main

factor that stimulates the respondents to adopt the Internet for learning English. In simple words, it can be argued that the Pakistani English language learners consider the Internet useful that is why they benefit from the Internet for learning English.

H2: Perceived ease of use (PEOU) will positively influence learners' behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning English.

Table 3 shows that the significant p -value is 0.975 which is more than the acceptable value of 0.05 that is why it can be stated that PEOU has no impact on the dependent variable i.e., BI. In simple words it can be argued that the Pakistani English language learners do not consider the Internet as an easy tool for learning English.

H3: Subjective norm (SN) will positively influence learners' behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning English.

Table 3 illustrates that p -value is 0.025 which is 0.05. This shows that subjective norm (SN) significantly influences learners' behavioral intention (BI) to adopt web for learning English. The standardized coefficient β -value (0.144) in table 3 (H3) shows that SN exerts the least impact on the BI of the respondents to use the resources of the Internet for learning English.

H4: Perceived behavioral control (PBC) will positively influence learners' behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning English.

Table 3 illustrates that p -value is 0.009 which is less than 0.05. It shows that perceived behavioral control (PBC) significantly influences learners' behavioral intention (BI) to learn English with the help of the Internet. The standardized coefficient β (0.169) shows that PBC has larger impact than SN on the behavioral intention of the respondents.

H5: Attitude (A) will positively influence learners' behavioral intention (BI) to accept and use the Internet for learning English.

p -value (0.000) showed in table 3 verifies that the results are statistically significant. It shows that learners' attitude (A) significantly stimulates learners' behavioral intention (BI) to learn English with the help of the Internet. The standardized coefficient ($\beta=0.262$) proves Attitude the second largest factor controlling the behavioral intention of the respondents.

Discussion of Findings

The significant p -values of all factors except perceived ease of use (PEOU) reveal that all factors except PEOU significantly stimulate learners' behavioral intention (BI) to learn English with the help of the Internet. As the standardized coefficients β -values of PU (0.610), A (0.269), PBC (0.169) and SN (0.144) reveal, it is PU that claims the largest value among all other variables. So, PU is most prominent factor that controls the Pakistani English language learners to use the Internet for learning English. The second factor which largely stimulate the Pakistani learners to use the Internet for learning English is their positive attitude (A) towards Internet based English language learning, whereas perceived behavioral control (PBC) and subjective norm (SN) are the third and fourth major factors respectively which largely affect learners' behavioral intention (BI) to use the Internet as a tool for the purpose of learning English. In other words, perceived usefulness (PU), attitude (A), subjective norm (SN) and perceived behavioral control work as stimulants that reinforce the Pakistani second language learners to use the Internet for the purpose of learning English.

Conclusion

Better knowledge about learner-psychology leads to improvement of teaching practices. This study focused on ESL learners online voluntary language learning behavior. The findings of the study show that the following

factors/reasons urge the Pakistani language learners to use and benefit from the Internet for learning English (a) The Pakistani English language learners perceive that the Internet would improve their English language learning performance. Perceived usefulness β : 0.610 (b) Attitude of the Pakistani English learners towards Internet based language learning is positive. Attitude β : 0.262 (c) Learners can afford resources such as digital gadgets and money to buy Internet data. Perceived behavioral control β : 0.169. (d) Learners are asked by their teachers and other companions to use the Internet to learn English. Subjective norm β : 0.144. The above-mentioned reasons compel the learners to accept and use the Internet for learning English.

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