Research Article

THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTION IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A CASE STUDY OF TWO KURDISH EFL LEARNERS ALONG WITH AN OVERVIEW OF ENGLISH AS A WORLD LANGUAGE

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A B S T R A C T

In the process of second language acquisition (SLA), there are key theories such as behaviourism, cognitive and socio cultural to elucidate how learners can best learn a language and, of course, none of them can fully explain this. However, presumably, socio cultural theory can be seen as the most appropriate one to channel and clarify how languages are learned. This is basically because it considers language learning as a social practice and also makes students an active part of the process of learning. This study will focus on two Kurdish case studies to determine the significant of social and attitudinal factors in the success of SLA. It also presents the common language difficulties that English learners may face in the process of communication. According to second language acquisition theories, additionally, learners rely on their own educational background and experience to successfully get their meanings across. This study could be a leading point for foreign language instructors to implement useful pedagogical approaches and provide students with more communicative competency in the class. For achieving the study purposes, semi- structured interview and observation were employed as data collection methods and also two students were selected purposively who were studying English language at Soran University, Faculty of Arts**.

INTRODUCTION

The study of Second language Acquisition (SLA) is a controversial topic as there are different perspectives and theories which investigate how languages are learned. Having said this, Ellis (1985, p.4) states '' Second Language Acquisition is a complex process, involving many interrelated factors''. This may suggest that more attention should be given to some factors, such as motivation, positive attitude and social interaction in EFL settings as they are considered the key factors in the success of foreign language learning. According to behaviorism theory, Language learning only occurs when learners can imitate and produce the exact forms of the target language, and then they receive positive reinforcement (Aimin, 2013, p.162).

In the view of cognitive theory, while, SLA is a mental process and people are born with genetic ability to learn language (Ellis, 2008). However, socio-cultural theory has a universal view and might better explain how people learn a second language (Ohta, 2000).

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The theory offers a significant perspective of teaching and learning English as a global language that Language cannot be learned in isolation rather it is a social endeavor in its essence (Lantolf, 2003). That is to say, learning only occurs through meaningful participation in social or collaborative experience. By implementing Socio-cultural principles in the language classes, Kurdish instructors can make the teaching learning process more effective and also help learners to be responsible for their own learning.

Apart from it is on the curriculum and compulsory subject, there are many possible reasons for Kurdish EFL learners to willingly want to study and learn a foreign/second language, such as advancement in their professional lives and getting a good carrier. In fact, it is important to establish a clear meaning for the term SLA in the context of this study. The term refers to the learning of any language which is not the mother tongue. Gass&Selinker define SLA as "the process of learning another language after the native language has been learned" (2001, p.5).

This study aims to analyze two Kurdish case studies in order to provide a clear picture of how Kurdish EFL learners use a language in authentic contexts and also what challenges they

usually have to successfully get their meanings across in the process of communication. It then examines the role of social and attitudinal factors in order to identify how the learners have acquired the language according to second language theories. This paper starts by providing a literature regarding the topic which is being researched along with an overview of English as a global language. It then gives a discussion of the research methodology including; sampling, data collection instruments and ethical aspects of the research. Before the conclusion, the the analysis of learners' language and their context of learning will be presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of English as a world language and discuss the key theories which explain the process of SLA, such as Behaviourism, Cognitive and Socio cultural theories.

Overview of English as a world language

English is spoken by many millions of people as a global language around the world. However, many English users are not native speakers; thus, they need to deal with different varieties of English. In other words, they might choose the variant which closes to their first language (L1) and is the most understandable by English speakers (Bloch & Starks, 1999, p. 80).

There are many factors that have combined to make English a global language. Through the British Empire, for example, the language was sent to Asia and Africa (Crystal, 2003). Consequently, English has been transferred into new socio-cultural contexts and has become a widespread language in these areas, as it could dominate their languages and cultures as well. This is basically because people in these continents have continued to use English as a means of communication, even in the post-colonial period (Kachru and Nelson, 2001, p. 9).

In addition to this, the great influence of American culture and technology could potentially accelerate the spread of English across the world (Harmer, 2007, p. 15). The cultural domination of America has become a widespread phenomenon as millions of people watch Hollywood movies and listen to famous American singers who all speak English. In technology, similarly, the internet boasts an enormous number of academic sources and a great deal of information in English and people use the internet as a main channel of broadcasting, social interaction and the exchange of information (Kayman, 2007, pp.12-13).

Perhaps more importantly, Kayman (2007, p.10) stated that English has become a desirable lingua franca which can be described as a language adopted for communication between people whose local language is not the same. Notwithstanding this, Smith (2005, p.61) considers English as an inappropriate lingua franca when used globally as a means of communication as English pronunciation and structure are difficult to learn. Concerning the future of English and its widespread use could possibly bring about the rise of local varieties. As a result, English varieties may begin to increase in the future with their own rules and cultural identity. Therefore, learners need to be exposed to kinds of different English in order to be able to communicate meaningfully (Gradol, 2001, p.26).

Behaviourism Theory

Behaviourism is a key theory which was developed between 1950s and 1960s to discuss and explain the process of second language learning. The theory states that language learning is like any other kind of learning or behaviour. It includes habit formation which is based on the concept of stimulus, response, reinforcement (Ellis, 1997, pp.31-2). In other words, learners will be given positive stimuli or incentives when they successfully use a correct form of the language. Conversely, students receive a negative reinforcement if they use incorrect forms of the language (Harmer, 2007).

The theory suggests that learning will take place only when the learners have an opportunity to practise and imitate the exact input time after time in order to produce the correct form of the language. This implies that permanent imitation of the sounds or patterns can be considered as a key procedure in language learning (Mitchell *et al*, 2013). However, this may suggest that behaviourism may not properly elucidate SLA. This is possibly because it only observes the input and output of the learners in the process of language learning, without taking what is going on in their minds into consideration. In fact, however, learners might not reproduce the output as exactly as they hear the input because they are more likely to use their own rules in the process of language learning (Crystal, 2003).

Cognitive Theory, Interlanguage Theory and Krashen's hypotheses

Cognitive theory was introduced after Behaviourism could not sufficiently explain language acquisition. Noam Chomsky, as one of the key figures in that particular field in (Lightbown&Spada, 2006, pp.15-16) criticises the behaviourism theory since it does not fully explain the creativity of language. Having said this, children do not simply imitate the surrounding language and chains of words. They have the innate ability to internalise and discover rules in order to generate novel sentences that they have never heard before, for example,'' mummy goed'' (Mitchell *et al*, 2013, p.30). Similarly, Ellis (1992, pp. 4-5) states that intensive mimicking fails to reduce learners' errors and also discourages them from language learning. According to Cook and Newson, (1996, pp.79-82) human beings have ability to learn language, as they are programmed with an inborn faculty called Language Acquisition Device (LAD). This suggests that people are genetically programmed with a common knowledge of how any language should be constructed (Mitchell *et al*, 2013, p. 61).

Gass and Selenker (2001, p.12) introduced the term of "Interlanguage" to refer to the language constructed by second language learners as a unique linguistic system based on the concept of L1 and moving towards the target language. However, this is different from L1 and L2. The theory of interlanguage (IL) has some central concepts (hypothesis) to explain the process of SLA. For instance, it begins with "over-generalisation in the target language rules" in which learners over apply the rules that they have learned (Ellis, 1985, p.48). Secondly, a learner's grammar changes frequently by adding and omitting rules which results in an interlanguage continuum. This could also play an essential role in learners' increasing understanding of the complexity of the second language (James, 2007, pp.9).

Thirdly, in some cases learners could create the linguistic systems that comprise variable rules. This means that learners are supposed to have competing forms at any developmental stage. In other cases, however, some interlanguage systems are almost the same. Therefore, changes in the rules could be possibly made because of mistakes made by learners in utilising the knowledge of their first language for communication. These suggest that variability could be regarded as an aspect of performance, not competence (Ellis, 2008, p.411). Finally, learners attempt to apply different learning strategies in order to progress with their interlanguage. Consequently, they are supposed to make errors when they use various learning strategies. Omission errors, for example, indicate that learners intend to simplify the rules of language by omitting some grammatical features, as they are not ready to absorb them (Hedge, 2000, pp.18).

Krashen (1982, p.9) proposes five central hypotheses to account the process of SLA. These are the acquisition natural hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. However, in this section, only monitor hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis will be discussed as they are most related to the present case study. Having said this, the monitor hypothesis states that conscious learning acts as a monitor to check and repair the acquirers' output in the learned language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In order for second language learners to use conscious learning effectively, there should be three conditions such as, time, focus on form and knowledge of the rules (Krashen, 1982). Having said this, second language learners should have adequate time to utilise the conscious rules accurately.

The learners, furthermore, need to know the rules of the target language and to focus on the correctness of what they say in order to use their monitor efficiently (Ellis, 2008). However, this might not be acceptable in natural communication because it may make learners feel anxious during speaking (Hedge, 2000). This means that people who worry about the correctness of speech and over use monitoring would probably not be able to improve their oral fluency. Thus, it is advisable for learners to monitor in the process of communication only when it is appropriate (Mitchell *et al*, 2013).

The affective filter hypothesis implies that there are some attitudinal factors such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety which could play a key role in the process of SLA (Krashen, 1982, pp. 30-2). In other words, learners with a high level of motivation and self-confidence (a low affective filter) are more likely to seek input and perform better in the target language. Conversely, if the affective filter is high, learners are less likely to feel happy and be successful in learning the target language (Mitchell *et al*, 2013, p. 45).

Socio-Cultural Theory

Socio-cultural theory has also become a central approach in the process of accounting SLA. The core idea behind this theory is that learners need to interact in a social context in order to successfully acquire the target language (Hedge, 2000). Thus, socio-cultural theory implies that language can be learned through social activities and communication in real contexts. However, some language acquirers might be more successful than others according to the extent of their participation in communicative activities, or the amount of mediation that they receive from interlocutors. (Troike, 2006, p. 112).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was introduced by Vygotsky as a main concept of socio-cultural theory. The notion of ZPD is that when learners cannot use the language independently, they need assistance from the interlocutor and social environment in order to reach the desired outcome and acquire language skills. In addition, ZPD could enable learners to reach a higher level of knowledge of the target language with the support of an interlocutor (Mitchell *et al*, 2013, p. 223). This infers that ZPD could be utilised to differentiate between the learners' actual level and potential level of language performance. This represents the level that learners have already mastered the level that they can achieve after being supported by interlocutor (Ellis, 2008, p.271). Thus, we can see that social communication facilitates the mental process of learners, by giving them access to the knowledge that they need to trigger the internal process. Afterwards, they internalise the knowledge in order to speak as part of social interaction (Lightbown&Spada, 2006).

In the view of socio-cultural theory, furthermore, the success of SLA could be heavily influenced by some other significant factors such as motivation, attitude and age. In other words, when there is a reason for learners to speak the target language, they will be more motivated to use the language in a social context (Troike, 2006). Similarly, when learners have a positive attitude towards L2 culture and community, they will have more willingness to communicate with them (Mitchell, 2013: 22). This indicates that motivation and positive attitudes could play a central role for learners in being able to achieve a faster proficiency in a second language.

There is a common consensus that younger learners could be seen as better learners than older ones (Jacks & Rodgers, 2000). This is possibly because adolescent learners are more willing to engage in social activities and they might not be very restricted by their sense of cultural identity (Gass&Selinker, 2001, p. 343). Thus, for example, it could be seen that immigrant children could acquire the second language as well as its native speakers, while their parents might fail to reach the same level, especially in fluency (Lightbown&Spada, 2013, p.92).

In addition, Schumann (1986, p. 379) points out that as much as learners acculturate to the new language speakers, they are more likely to master the learned language. He further goes on and categorises acquirers into two types based on the concept of acculturation. Firstly, the learners who intend to integrate socially and psychologically with the speakers of the target language are expected to acquire the target language. The second group the acquirers who acculturate with the new language speakers with a specific aim such as building a good career, are less likely to acquire the target language as proficiently as the first group.

Rational of the study

The topic of second language acquisition has been widely investigated and researched in the field of language learning and pedagogy. However, there have been very few studies conducted in Kurdistan, specifically about the role of social

and attitudinal factors in achieving a good level of English Proficiency. This study should be, therefore, seen as a necessary step to fill this gap and, perhaps, contribute to the development of the current English teaching policy in the context of Kurdish universities. In Kurdistan, likewise, students have been taught formal English for several years, and there is a possibility that they may not be able to successfully and meaningfully use English. Having said this, the basic problem with Kurdish EFL learners is their limited opportunity of using English in their daily life and the majority of them only use English inside the classrooms where they are supposed to mainly focus on accuracy.

From this we can infer that understanding the learners' beliefs and needs could enable instructors to be in a better position to know how to effectively adopt and implement new teaching approaches and productive strategies within the classrooms, in order to teach English effectively and achieve the expected learning outcomes. Further reason to conduct this study, perhaps more importantly, is to guide learners in order to successfully employ their own strategies to get their meanings across in the process of communication. Indeed, the findings of this study might be able to provide clear insights of the potential problems that learners confront in using English authentically and also enable them to find their ways of learning English in order to learn using English efficiently and meaningfully for real life purposes. In particular, this study aimed to answer the following questions;

1. What is the role of social interaction in learning English as a foreign language?
2. Is there any significant relationship between students' motivation and their English proficiency?
3. What language difficulties do English learners usually have to successfully get their meanings across in the process of communication?

METHODOLOGY

This section provides a short overview of the two learners chosen to take part in this case study including, their learning context and educational background. This may help to explain any issues they have in SLA since their learning issues might be related to how they have studied English, not how long they have studied it. Indeed, this is could be useful to determine to what extent the socio-cultural context has affected their success in learning English as a global language. It then identifies the methods that have been used to collect the data from the participants and describes the issues related to the methods.

Participants

This study was undertaken at a Kurdish university named Soran, in Faculty of Arts and English Department where the medium of instruction is English. The participants are the two third year students and they willingly participated in this case study. The two subjects were selected purposively since they were feasible to access the rich information within a particular context and they were useful for the purpose of this study as well (Guarte& Barrios, 2006). According to Denscombe (1998, p.15), purposive sampling ''is applied to those situations where the researcher already knows something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects particular ones because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data''.

The first learner is Lehat and he is 23 years old, while, the second learner is Zhulin and she is 22 years old. Learners are from Kurdistan, their first language (L1) is Kurdish and English is their foreign language (FL). They have been studying English for almost 14 years, starting from the 5th grade of primary school and their level of English Proficiency is around pr-intermediate. Studying English for them is a compulsory subject and they have been accepted in English department based on their scores in the high school. However, they have a good motivation for learning English. Apart from being considered better students, this is basically because, for example, they are more likely to get good jobs outside the class or when they graduate from university.

Observation

The first method that was used for data collection in this case study was observation. This is because observation is one of the data collection methods that can be used in real settings to access valid data for social research purposes (Thomas, 2009). Similarly, the use of observation could enhance the strengths and validity of the present study since it provided the researcher with an opportunity to gather first hand data and observed the events as they naturally happened (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013). Further reason for using this method, as Gray (2004, p.238) confirmed, was to access beyond learners' opinions and self-interpretations of their attitudes. This suggests that observation is a key method of data collection and is more than just observing participants since it allows the researcher to access hidden and rich data which may lead to presenting a clear picture of a research phenomenon (Koshy, 2005).

Concerning the process of observation, the researcher has observed the learners' language in a natural context as they were speaking about various topics. This was practical to not only analyze the learners' systematic errors, but also their proficiency in English. This was also helpful to demonstrate greater understanding of second language theories and how students can best learn English. In this study, the participants have been informed about conducting observation in order to avoid ethical issues.

An interesting issue that emerged with this method, however, was that sometimes learners did not always use their language knowledge in natural conversation. In other words, the participants could perform differently when they were observed explicitly which might pose a threat to the naturalism of the study (Oliver, 2003, p.87). To address this issue and access hidden data, thus, a covert observation was employed (Dawson, 2002, p.32). Likewise, the identities of participants have not been released in this study in order to enable learners to demonstrate their real linguistic knowledge or language ability (Walsh, 2001). From this we can infer that the collection of written data could possibly provide further accuracy for this case study.

Semi structured interviews

Another instrument which was used for the purpose of data collection in this study was semi-structured interview. This is basically because this method can deeply explore the learners' perception about the subject which is being researched (Dilley, 2000). In other words, interview was considered as an appropriate instrument for gathering information because it could enable to elicit "rich data on peoples' views, attitudes,

and the meanings that underpin their lives and behaviours" (Gray, 2009, p.370). This means that the use of interviews was feasible to understand what participants really meant beyond their actual words and also produce a fairly good amount of data to successfully answer the research questions. The interviews were constructed with predetermined questions. However, additional questions were added based on the interviewees' responses in order to explore their attitudes and language proficiency in a more detailed way regarding the process of SLA. All the interviews were held in the English language and were recorded and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. In the interviews, the interviewees were asked some questions about their personalities and experiences of English. This was helpful to get primary knowledge about their personalities and cultural backgrounds as well in order to examine to what extent the social context comes into a play in the process of SLA. Another reason to apply this procedure was that it provided the opportunity to listen to interviews and make written transcriptions to highlight the learners' systematic errors.

Ethical issues

As an integral part of the present study, ethical principles have been considered at the beginning of this study to achieve the professional standards of technical procedures and protect participants' rights. In the interest of confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the participants instead of their real names. This means that the anonymity of participants and confidentiality have been ensured as their actual names and personal information did not appear anywhere in the study which could promote the validity of the study (Fraenkel&Wallen, 2008).

Furthermore, all participants were of legal age and informed consents were gained from them as a key feature of the research ethics (Gray, 2014). To address the ethical issues, a further principle that was considered was that the participants had a clear understanding of how the collected information would be used in this study and they were given the right to withdraw their data at any time without giving any explanation (Robson, 2011)

DATA ANALYSIS

Before analyzing the samples of learners' language, it is important to understand their educational context and experience of learning. This may help to explain any issue they have in SLA, since their learning issues might be related to how they have studied English, not how long they have studied it. Indeed, this could be useful to determine to what extent the socio-cultural context has affected their success in learning English as a global language. What is more, in order to precisely and concisely present the results, and also for the sake of reducing complication and repetition in the data analysis, the findings resulting from both methods interview and observation which are related to the research questions will be combined and presented together. This can also be useful to present a clear picture of data and discover new themes in the study.

Context of learning

As already mentioned, both learners started studying English at the age of 11 at a public school in Kurdistan. There were very poor learning facilities in terms of resources and the style of teaching. At school they were not interested in studying English as they were taught following the behaviourist principles of repetition and memorization, without learning about meaning. Having said this, Learning grammar rules and dialogue repetition were compulsory subjects. This indicates that there was a limited exposure of authentic English and the learners could not have enough opportunity to use the language in a natural context. As the learners claimed, consequently, they could not reach a good level in English as long as they were educated at their primary and secondary schools. This could point to a major failing in the behaviourism theory, which states that learning can only succeed through imitation and direct correction (Harmer, 2007, p. 51).

When the participants were students at the school, furthermore, they studied English based on basic grammar rules and vocabulary in a very teacher controlled context. The teacher, for example, directly corrected their language errors in the class and they had to do exactly what the teacher expected. This could be a reason that they have always been aware of making mistakes when the use the language for the purpose of communication (Richards & Rodchers, 2000). This means that the style of teaching had a negative effect on their English learning as they were taught following behaviourist principles. During their English classes at the school, likewise, the teacher used to explain new grammar points in Kurdish and learners usually tried to compare English grammar with the Kurdish equivalent. As a result, they could possibly have produced a Kurdish-English variant. This could be regarded as one of the problems of English as a global language, as it is very open to the production of an increasing number of variants (Ellis, 1997).

Although they have some similarities in terms of educational context and the way they have been taught English, but there are still some differences between them. Having said this, First learner made significant progress in English through constant interaction with his English and non-English friends. The first learner also is a social learner and enjoys communication or chatting with those around him, especially with native speakers of English. This supports the point which states the learners who have a positive attitude and motivation towards learning English language and culture are more likely to achieve a good level of English proficiency compared to those who do not (Lightbown&Spada, 2013). Nevertheless, second learner has reached a good level of English in writing and reading, but she is a quiet and shy person when speaking with people, especially native speakers. This may be because she uses her affective filter to monitor her grammatical errors and to make herself aware that she is using the language accurately (Krashen, 1982, P.30).

The analyses of the samples of learners' language

As already discussed in the literature review, behaviourism is no longer regarded as an appropriate theory to account for the process of second language acquisition. Therefore, this section will only focus on the cognitive and socio-cultural theories to analyse the samples of learners' language. Additionally, this section will not only look at their language in terms of errors but also how they use it in a natural context. For example, when second learner was talking to me about

her father, without any pauses said that "I miss my dad, I have not seen him for a long time". This example indicates that the learner has reached a good level of English, as she correctly used the present perfect tense to talk about a completed event in relation to the present time. According to socio-cultural theory, her motivation for learning English may have contributed in the success of her second language acquisition (Schumann, 1986, p.383). In addition, cognitive theory suggests that another explanation for this example might be the critical period hypothesis. In other words, if the learner starts learning English at an early age, they are more likely to acquire the language and reach a level of proficiency (Lightbown&Spada, 2013, p.22).

When the first learner was talking about his childhood and, similarly, said that "When I was a child I used to play football on the street". This instance indicates that he has reached a fairly good level of English and mastered the language aspect of 'used to' to describe the habits or repeated actions which occurred over a period of time in the past. At other times, the learner used some words and expressions which indicate a good level of English, such as 'fabulous', 'incredible', 'long time no see', 'I will be around here',' my laptop cost me an arm and leg'. These examples reflect the learner's engagement in interaction with English speakers and English culture. According to socio-cultural theory, social interaction and positive attitude towards English can greatly contribute to the success of his language performance. In other words, English learners willingly want to learn a language when they have a positive attitude and motivation towards English language and culture. (Schumann, 1986).

It would be wrong, though, to consider that first learner has reached as a good level as native speakers because it has been noticed that he twice used adverbs in the wrong position in a sentence. For example, the learner said "My father carefully drove the car", instead of "My father drove the car carefully"). According to the interlanguage theory, this is could be an example of first language transfer (Ellis, 1997, p.33). This is possible because the order of adverbs in the learner's first language (Kurdish) is different from English. Therefore, the learner may have intended to apply his first language rules for adverbs to English.

Further analysis of first learner's error found that he fails to use the past continuous tense effectively in some occasions. Having said this, the learner said "I read a novel when you phoned me "instead of saying, "I was reading a novel when you phoned me". This error could be explained by Slenker'sinterlanguage as an instance of an overgeneralization error (Ellis, 1985, p.48). In this case, the learner could have learnt the past simple tense and may mistakenly over-use it instead of the past continuous.

As a result, the first learner could construct a correct sentence in terms of structure, but convey the wrong meaning in terms of the context. Another possible explanation of this example might be the learning strategy element which is one of the concepts of Slelinker'sinterlanguage. It appears that the learner intends to use his learning strategy in the process of SLA in order to simplify the language features. It is common for learners to commit language errors when they attempt to use a different learning strategy in order to make further progress in the target language (Hedge, 2000, P. 52).

Going back to analyse other examples of the second learner's language, she mistakenly used the present simple three times, when she was talking to me about her life at the school. For instance, she said "When I go to the school", instead of saying, "When I went to the school". If we investigate this sample and compare it with the level of her study, it seems unusual that she should commit this kind of error. As already mentioned in the methodology, this was considered to be an issue in collecting data as learners did not always use their own linguistic knowledge to use a language. This example could possibly be explained according to the socio-cultural theory since the learner needs more social communication in order to improve both oral fluency and accuracy. This suggests that if the learner integrates socially and psychologically with native speakers of English, she is more likely to acquire or achieve good level of English proficiency (Schumann, 1986). This example might be also explained by Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, since she is shy and conscious of making mistakes when she is speaking. Indeed, Krashen (1982, P. 30) points out that a learner with a high level of affective filter tends to be anxious and not very successful in the process of SLA.

When I was talking to the second learner about her childhood, she said "When I was a child I played with my friends every day''. This shows that the learner may mistakenly use the past simple. So the learner may intend to say "When I was a child I used to play with my friends every day". This example may be explained according to the interlanguage theory of over generalisation, since the learner may pay so much attention to over-using the past simple. The learner may, thus, produce a correct sentence grammatically, but it may have an inappropriate meaning in the context, which may lead listeners feel uncomfortable. Another interpretation of this example may follow Krashen's monitor hypothesis. It seems that the learner needs to focus more on the correctness of what she says when it is appropriate to speak in a spontaneous way. (Krashen, 1982, p. 15)

Another issue which was observed in second learner's language was difficulty with the use of third conditional tense. Having claimed this, she was talking to me about the academic sources and she said, "Oh sorry, if you told me, I sent to you the article" instead of saying, "Oh sorry, if you had told me, I would have sent the articles to you". In spite of being understood by the listener, this instance can still be regarded as a language error. This may be considered as an example of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) – as a main concept of socio-cultural theory (Troike, 2006, p.112).
This suggests that she needs to have more interaction with native speakers and engage in social environment in order to make further progress with her language. However, the learner does not consistently interact with native speakers of English, as she mainly speaks Kurdish to her native friends. Parrott (2010, p.283) points out that even learners who have reached a good level in a language need more opportunities to use it in a natural context. This implies that learners should consistently take part in social communication in order to reach a high level of English proficiency (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). According to the interlanguage theory, moreover, this language error could be regarded as an example of a learning strategy. Having said this, second learner may intend to simplify the rules of the target language by omitting the word would and changing the tense which

seems difficult for her to apply in the spoken form. The learner, as a result, attempts to apply various learning strategies such as omission in order to simplify the rules of the target language (Ellis, 1997, P.34)

After analysing the samples of both learners' language, the evidences suggest that socio-cultural theory is more valid than the other theories to explain the process of SLA. If this right, then the behaviourism theory might be dismissed. Perhaps more importantly, furthermore, social interaction can help English learners to achieve a good level of English proficiency and be able to use the language effectively in real life situations. Similarly, positive attitude and motivation towards English language and culture can play a key role in the success of SLA. Admittedly, learners have reached a good level of English but they still have some difficulties in using English for real life purposes. Therefore, they should take advantage of the social environment to improve their English.

CONCLUSION

Although this paper is a small study in the field of SLA, it attempts to investigate the significant issues in language teaching and explain language theories in order to identify how the process of SLA takes place. The paper starts by analysing the place of English, and then identifies the most significant factors that have contributed to make English a global language. In addition to this, the study has found that each second language theory has its own arguments for and against. In other words, one theory could provide better analytical clarification than another based on the samples of the learners' language. In addition, the study suggests that cognitive and socio-cultural theories are combinations of each other and could be regarded as the most appropriate theories to explain the process of SLA.

A further significant outcome of this paper is that if learners want to learn English successfully, they need exposure to as much social interaction as possible. Similarly, the findings of this study revealed that positive attitude and motivation towards the target language and culture can considerably contribute in the success of SLA.

This case study has also found that both learners seemed to be good communicators in English. The second learner is generally learning English in the class context, while the first one seems to be not only a class learner but also a naturalistic learner as he is learning English through regular interaction with his classmates and native speakers. However, they still have some difficulties with English, especially in using the right tense in a particular context. In other words, the second learner has difficulty with using the past tense and constructing conditional sentences, while the past continuous and adverbs seem to be more problematic for the first learner. Therefore, they should become more aware of the importance of social interaction and take advantage of the cultural context to improve their English proficiency.

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