Second Language Learning: A case study

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to provide a discussion on the issues raised by TESS teachers (teachers of non-native English language) as a result of the changes in English language. In simple terms, it is a study that focuses on identifying and analyzing learners' mistakes, as well as exploring the reasons behind these errors, using conceptual and theoretical methods regarding second language learning that may be reflected in these errors. According to Miles and Mitchell (2004: 5), second language learning "is the learning of any language, to any level, provided that the second language is learned only at some time after the first language is acquired."

In summary, the case study of this research focused on two learners from the same cultural background, but who had different experiences in learning a second language. Some of the learners' faults have been explained in the research according to the social context and a variety of other factors.

Key words: ***TESS teachers, English language, second language learning.***

المستخلص:

الغرض من هذه البحث هو تقديم مناقشة بشأن القضايا التي أثارها معلمون التيسول (معلمون اللغة الانجليزية لغير المتحدثين بها) نتيجة للتغيرات التي طرأت على اللغة الانجليزية. بعبارات بسيطة ، هي دراسة تركز على تحديد وتحليل أخطاء المتعلمين ، وكذلك استكشاف الأسباب الكامنة وراء هذه الأخطاء ، باستخدام الطرق المفاهيمية والنظرية فيما يتعلق بتعلم اللغة الثانية والتي قد تنعكس على هذه الأخطاء. وفقًا لمايلز وميتشل (2004: 5) ، فإن تعلم اللغة الثانية "هو تعلم أي لغة ، إلى أي مستوى ، شريطة أن يتم تعلم اللغة الثانية فقط في وقت ما بعد اكتساب اللغة الأولى". باختصار ، ركزت دراسة الحالة لهذا البحث على اثنين من المتعلمين من نفس الخلفية الثقافية ، ولكن لديهم تجارب مختلفة في تعلم اللغة الثانية. بعض أخطاء المتعلمين قد وضحت في البحث وفقا للسياق الاجتماعي ومجموعة متنوعة من العوامل الأخرى.

Introduction:

Over the past decades, English has become the crucial worldwide language as well as a primary means of international communication. This could be attributed to complex cultural, economic and technological forces. Graddol (1997) states that due to the development of the internet and international trade, the English language is spoken internationally and has spread geographically among all world languages. Additionally, the English language is commonly known as a lingua franca, as it is used as a working language among different regions in the

European Union, as well as a language of contact throughout the world. South-east Asia is probably a good example of this, where many are non-native English speakers. This is likely to have a profound impact on both English language teaching and on the language itself.

Moreover, there are multiple varieties which have developed from the English language, known as 'world Englishes'. These varieties include standard English in regions such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, the United States, New Zealand and South Africa, and other local varieties in countries such as Africa, India and the Caribbean. The concept of 'world Englishes' applies to many language users who add their own local words and expressions to their discourse. This means that the English language has extended its social, functional and cultural context through these world Englishes. Consequently, English has grown to be an essential rather than optional language, and it has become widely taught throughout the world (Crystal, 1997).

This growth of the English language has probably forced professional English teachers to accept either diversity or multiculturalism. Gnutzmann and Intemann (2005) point out that teachers need to teach Standard English as a linguistic model in classes, but they may also need to be flexible with learners in terms of their teaching model. In brief, teachers are not required to promote one form of English over another, but rather, they must respect learners' needs and take into consideration the contexts and purposes of use which are associated with them. Consequently,

> "*…the widespread use of English language as a language of wider communication will continue to exert pressure towards global uniformity as well as give rise to anxieties about 'declining' standards, language change and the loss of geolinguistic diversity. But as English shifts from foreign language to second language status for an increasing number of people, we can also expect to see English develop a larger number of local varieties. These contradictory tensions arise because English has two main functions in the world: it provides a vehicular language for international communication and it forms the basis for constructing cultural identities*" (Graddol, 1997: 56).

These issues could concern the native speakers of this language, due to the changes which have occurred, or which perhaps will occur, to the English language in the future.

The purpose of this assignment is to provide a discussion concerning issues raised by TESOL teachers as a result of changes to the English language. In simple terms, it is a study which focuses on identifying and analysing learners' mistakes, as well as exploring the reasons which lie behind these mistakes, using the conceptual and theoretical frameworks regarding second language learning which may reflect on these errors. According to Myles and Mitchell (2004:5), second language learning "is the learning of any language, to any level, provided only that the learning of the second language takes place sometime later than the acquisition of the first language". In brief, the case study of this research has concentrated on two learners who are from the same cultural background, but who have different experiences of learning the second language. In the following sections, some of the learners' errors will be discussed in relation to social context and a variety of other factors

Literature Review

This section will investigate and give an overview of some of the key concepts and theories on second language acquisition (SLA). The section will begin with the first theory which is behaviourism, followed by discussion of the cognitive theory that appeared as a consequence of the limitations and failure of behaviourism to interpret some of the key concepts of SLA. Subsequent analysis of this theory will in turn indicate further notions provided by theorists about SLA. Lastly, the section will address socio-cultural theory, which emerged to account for and depict why L2 learners are different from each other in terms of SLA.

Behaviourism theory

Loewen and Reinders (2011) explain that in the 1950s and early 1960s, behaviourism theory was a theory of learning which focused on the relationship between stimulus and response; this type of process is called the *formation of habits*. In other words, it was thought that children learn their L1 habit in correct forms by copying other people's utterance exactly. In addition to habit formation, there is a process of imitation, which involves taking someone else's speech and utilising it in one's own utterance. Building on this idea, Ellis (2005) illustrates that when a mechanised response to a specific stimulus is elicited from learners, then such behaviour can be seen as a habit.

Following on from this, Lado (1957, cited in Gass & Selinker, 2013:80) demonstrates that the contrastive analysis hypothesis emerged to enable comparisons to be made between L1 and L2, and thus identify similarities and differences regarding structures. Furthermore, it is claimed

that it is essential to clearly define and understand the notion of language *transfer*. Building on this idea, Towell and Hawkins (1994) state that an awareness of such transfer will make it easier for teachers to concentrate on these different structures and in turn, to apply methods that reinforce changes of habits in L2. In short, L2 learners may make errors as a result of L1 interference. However, the effects of this type of transfer could be either positive or negative. For example, when the features of L1 are similar to L2, this will create positive transfer to the second language, but if the features of L1 are different to the grammatical and phonological system of L2, then the transfer will be negative, and as a result, plenty of drilling and teaching are needed in order for it to be acquired.

However, this theory is attacked by cognitive theorists. Chomsky (1987, cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004:33) depicts that according to behaviourism, the input language which is learned by children is perhaps limited, since they may not be aware of the complexity of the language they utter as they have learned it habitually.

Interlanguage theory

These debatable notions have encouraged researchers to seek for other perspectives in order to account for learners' errors. For instance, the emergence of error analysis theory assisted in discovering the processes of *interlanguage*, which may interpret the errors which are produced by learners. This is defined as "the language system that is created by L2 learners as they develop their L2 knowledge towards the target language norms" (Loewen & Reinders, 2011:98). This means that learners learn the target language in a systematic manner. Even if the structure of the target language is different, the learner's interlanguage is still systematic. Selinker (1972, cited in Loewen & Reinders, 2011:98) states that interlanguage systems can be dynamic rather than static, as they are developed according to how learners gain and reform the input of L2 knowledge. Furthermore, this theory suggests that learners' mistakes cannot be avoided, but should be interpreted as part of the learning process. Selinker (1972, cited in Wei, 2008:128) goes further, and identifies five processes which lead to the creation of interlanguages; these are communication strategies, learning strategies, over-generalisation, transfer of training, and L1 transfer. Some of these will be examined further in the analysis section in order to describe the errors produced by the L2 learners in the case study.

The monitor model hypothesis

Another theoretical approach was proposed by Stephen Krashen (1982, cited in Gass & Selinker, 2001). His 'monitor model' was affected by Chomsky's theory of first language acquisition. Krashen's ideas appeared when there were no satisfactory views about language teaching beyond behaviourism. Thus, Krashen began describing and dividing his model into five hypotheses. The first one is the *acquisition-learning hypothesis,* which argues that learners acquire the second language in exactly the same way as children picking up their first language. This might occur with conscious awareness of rule learning but not of language form. The next one is the *monitor hypothesis.* This type of approach is responsible for evaluating what language learners produce and monitoring if this is correct. Such monitoring ensures learners produce the relevant acquired language. The third one is the *natural order hypothesis,* which means that second language acquisition develops in an expected sequence, in the same way as in first language acquisition. The simplest features of language may not be easily acquired by even advanced second language learners. The fourth is the *input hypothesis;* this is concerned with how learners are exposed to language which comprises i + 1, in which i refers to the language which has been already acquired and 1 refers to all aspects of language such as words, pronunciation and grammatical rules. The last one is the *affective filter hypothesis,* which suggests that language might not be acquired effectively, as an 'affective filter' may hinder learners from acquiring the language and as a result they will filter out input.

Krashen's model has been criticised by White (1987, cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2006:38), who argues that there is no evidence to support the five hypotheses, nor any way of distinguishing between acquisition and learning by implementing different stages. White suggests that this learning behaviour can be applied in a superficial style but not in a deep way. Consequently, linguists have continued to explore issues concerning SLL since the 1970s. For example, Mitchell and Myles (2004) have raised some questions which need investigation in language-specific terms, firstly with regard to the ways in which first and second language acquisition are similar, and how this notion is relevant to *universal grammar*. A second question relates to what the similarities are, in cognitive terms, between second language learning processing and other complicated processing tasks. Researchers need to study SSL theories from a variety of perspectives in order to find logical answers.

The Universal Grammar

The first theory which attempts to provide logical answers is that of universal grammar. Eckman (1996, cited in Gas & Selinker, 2001:168) describes *universal grammar* (UG) as a special notion which supports the concept that there is innate understanding involved in language learning. However, this notion may itself raise various questions. Gas and Selinker (2001) claim that the UG approach to second language acquisition could imply different perspectives of learnability, and argue that the idea of innate universal language characteristics is promoted by an insistence on methods which may prove that children can be successful in acquiring a language in spite of insufficient input. The evidence presented by Chomsky (1997:167, cited in Gas & Selinker, 2001:169) supports this claim: "The theory of a particular language is its grammar. The theory of languages and the expressions they generate is *Universal Grammar* (UG); UG is a theory of the initial state of the relevant component of the language faculty". This theory proposes that language comprises a group of principles and parameters which differ between all natural languages.

This concept has been criticised by other theorists. White (1989, cited in Gas & Selinker, 2001:170) illustrates that language input by itself cannot enable young learners to attain what adult learners achieve through complex grammar. Robinson (2001) also argues that language cannot be learned through the possession of a specific innate language mechanism as suggested by the *universal grammar*. Furthermore, based on Chomsky's criticism, Mitchell and Myles (2004) maintain that language learning is not necessarily about innate knowledge. Rather, it is about the development of communicative competence. The reason for this opposition to UG is perhaps that the concept of innate language is not sufficient to enable language specialists to interpret all aspects of development. In contrast, many second language acquisition researchers argue that the focus needs to be on the learning component, rather than the language dimensions suggested by the *universal grammar* theory.

Cognitive Theory

An alternative notion, cognitive theory, emerged in order to emphasis the second language acquisition process; this theory enables linguists to analyse learners' brain processes and how they acquire current information. It is supported by Lightbown and Spada (2006), who state that cognitive theories are concerned with the learning process within mental faculties. Such theories are not exclusive to SLA, but have emerged from other sectors of psychology and education.

From the perspective of second language acquisition, Loewen and Reinders (2011) explain that cognitive theories are of interest as they offer methods of investigating how second language learners acquire and produce language. Therefore, cognitive theories have been used in researching individual differences in order to explore how L2 learners can store and process the knowledge they have acquired in the brain. Information processing is one of the cognitive theories which has emerged to address this issue. In other words, this approach attempts to recognise how information accesses the cognitive system and how language is part of this process.

Furthermore, cognitive theorists are divided into two groups. The first group is concerned with processing approaches and the second with constructionist approaches. The processing approach aims to "investigate how second language learners process linguistic information, and how their ability to process the second language develops over time" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:97). Constructionist approaches deal with shared second language learning development by addressing communicative needs. According to Mitchell and Myles (2004), processing approaches have been subdivided into two types. The first is focused on information processing by investigating two memory stores (short-term memory (STM) and long-term memory (LTM)). The second type is declarative and procedural, and is focused on how second language is mechanised and restructured through repeated activation. McLaughlin's information-processing model (1987, cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004:100) is focused on information processing which could be either controlled or automatic. Controlled processing means that information which is temporarily activated in the memory requires more controlled attention. However, it might be restricted to short-term memory. In contrast, the processing can become automatic when language which is first produced by controlled processing is subjected to repeat activation and sequencing.

On the other hand, Anderson (1983; 1985, cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004:103) adopts the other type of processing approach, which takes place in three stages. The first is the cognitive stage, which can describe a procedure that has already been learned; secondly, the associative stage indicates how learners can perform tasks in a straightforward manner, and thirdly, the autonomous stage means that learners can attempt to perform skills rapidly and automatically. Some researchers, however, argue that declarative knowledge can be divided into two categories, which comprise conscious and unconscious components.

Loewen and Reinders (2011) point out that such constructionist approaches follow the notion of connectionism theory, which argues that learners exposed to linguistic features can produce them in situational contexts. Subsequently, learners can develop powerful networks which may connect these linguistic elements together and eventually, these elements will in turn activate the other features which are in the learner's mind. Although this perspective seems to have positive points, the connective learning model may produce sophisticated syntactic structures which require extra research or investigation (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

It may be argued that cognitive theory is perhaps focused on individuals' development rather than their involvement in social situations, especially with teachers. There are other theorists, however, who attempt to describe the role of learners from socio-cultural perspectives.

Acquisition and learning

First of all, a distinction must be made in order to understand the difference between second language acquisition and second language learning. According to Ellis (1985), acquisition means that L2 learners pick up language unconsciously when they are exposed to it, whereas learning means the L2 learners study the language consciously.

Interaction and socio-cultural theory

Building on the notion of engaging learners in a social environment, the interaction hypothesis believes that L2 learners can acquire language through their interaction in different social situations. According to Ellis (1985:133), "foreigner talk is likely to be influenced by a whole host of variables such as the topic of conversation, the age of participants...., and, in particular, the proficiency of the learners". Moreover, Long (1983, cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2006:43) argues that "modified interaction is the necessary mechanism for making language comprehensible. That is, what learners need is not necessarily simplification of the linguistic forms but rather an opportunity to interact with other speakers". The most influential theory related to this idea is Vygotsky's concept, which assumes that cognitive perspectives appear as a consequence of social interaction. This is confirmed by Cook (2008), who points out Vygotsky's suggestion that children have the aptitude to switch the process from external social use of language to internal mental use. Furthermore, Vygotsky (cited in Jordan et al., 2008:61) asserts that the role of teachers in supporting learners is crucial; he refers to the zone of proximal development (ZPD), in which teachers can involve learners in intellectual development so that

the learners' thinking can be advanced. Additionally, using the idea of scaffolding, adults are required to support children by utilising language which mediates between them and the world, in order to enable them to solve problems (Bruner, 1983; 1990, cited in Cameron, 2001:8).

Characteristics of L2 learners

There is no doubt that certain individual factors may affect the success of SLA learners, such as age, attitude, aptitude, intelligence and motivation, yet according to Cook (2008:135), such success "seems to be an element that can only be attributed to the individual; some people can, others cannot." For instance, motivation and attitude are associated with each other, but researchers cannot confirm whether positive motivation and attitude lead to beneficial language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Attitude is defined as "the persistence shown by the learner in striving for a goal" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, cited in Ellis, 1985:117), and Cook (2008) states that a long-stable attitude can cause motivation in L2 learners' minds which can be categorised into two types: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. In addition, age can affect L2 learners when they learn a language. Lightbown and Spada (2006) claim that children who are from immigrant families have the ability to communicate in their new society the same as native speakers, with high levels of mastery of spoken language compared to their parents, whose mastery is probably poor. Although children cannot be compared with older learners in terms of their grasp of language complexity, the age of the learner can greatly affect the rate and achievement of SLA (Ellis, 1985). In terms of intelligence, Mitchell and Myles (2004) point out that it is evident that L2 learners who are deemed intelligent by formal measurement can perform successfully in formal classroom settings. However, Harmer (2001) asserts that the aptitudes of learners are different in learning languages, since some can improve rapidly while others cannot. This can be measured by testing, though such tests have been criticised by researchers, since they cannot distinguish between the most and least intelligent learners.

As well as those mentioned above, there are probably other factors which can affect second language learners when they are learning the second language. Some of the factors will be discussed further in the analysis section of the case study.

Methodology

This section will describe the two subjects involved in the case study, as well as the influences of social context on both of them, by drawing on different factors and individual differences.

First of all, data was collected by observing and interviewing the two subjects of the study. The aim of this was to provide evidence about the subjects' communicative competence, in order to see if they seized opportunities to communicate with native speakers or not. The second method of data collection was a written test, in which grammatical accuracy could be measured. This data will be evaluated in relation to theories and hypotheses in the analysis section.

Based on the data, it seems that there are indeed several factors which may affect learners in learning a second language, including age, personality and motivation. The subjects of the case study talked about different topics and areas such as their learning background, their purposes in coming to the UK and whether they liked the environment or community where they lived. Both the subjects of the case study are Libyan. Their ages are different but are within the early forties, and both are studying at British universities. Ahmed is my relative and Huda is my sister. Huda had reached the higher pre-intermediate level of English, while Ahmed was at intermediate level. Both are currently studying PhDs in different fields.

The period of acquiring English language was different for the two learners. Ahmed emigrated to live in the UK with his family when he was five years old, and was resident there for a long time before going back to his country to work in an international company. The government then offered him a scholarship to study abroad. Huda, on the other hand, came to the UK in 2008 to study an MA in Computer Science, and has stayed to continue studying a PhD in the same field at the same university. With regard to their learning background, Ahmed and Huda have had different experiences of exposure to the English language, since Ahmed continues to study English in the UK within other subjects which are instructed in English, whereas Huda has not had much exposure to the English language because she only studied English when she was at secondary school, and then the teaching policy changed and her government prevented the teaching of English in schools for a period of time. Despite their different experiences, both have found that their English has improved compared with when they were in their home country. In terms of the data collection, they were eager to participate and provide information. The data that was collected, through both conversation and the written test, comprised some accurate and some

inaccurate language produced by both students. Some of the errors could be analysed as the consequences of different influences, and they varied between lexical and grammatical errors.

Analysis

This section identifies the errors made by the two subjects and concentrates on analysis of specific areas by drawing on variation theory to illuminate the intrinsic detail of the learners' errors. It also considers the significance of the social context in which learners acquire a second language.

It appears that some second language learners can be more successful in learning language than others. This could occur due to the age factor. Gas and Selinker (2013) claim that children can be more successful than adults in learning language. This can be seen in an example from Ahmed when he had been asked about his language improvement: *"I acquired a good range of vocabulary through my communication*". In comparison with Huda's example, *"Uh...I am good now",* it is obvious that the period of time of exposure to English when Ahmed was a child of five years had played a crucial role in his ability to store and acquire the English language, since he spoke fluently utilising a reasonable range of vocabulary. In contrast, Huda was hesitant and general in her speech, as she only started learning English at the age of 15 and for a short time. Building on this finding, it is argued that the favourable age to acquire a language is in the first ten years of life (Penfield and Roberts, 1959, cited in Ellis, 1985:107). Another point, highlighted by Ellis (1985), is that the level of success is affected by the number of years of exposure as well as the starting age. This can be seen in Ahmed's speech, since he appeared to be successful in his interaction and fluency in comparison with his grammatical accuracy. While Ahmed had had a fulfilling opportunity to acquire the English language which lasted for a long period of time, Huda had acquired the language within a limited period and she still has only the same level of experience even in the UK. Nevertheless, it is probably not age alone which can influence L2 learners. Rather, it is the way in which this combines with other factors that could play a part in second language learning. With regard to other research, the *critical period hypothesis* assumes that learners cannot obtain a high level of language proficiency within a specific age range. Lenneberg (1967, cited in Hummel, 2014:172) suggests that the change in this period might be as a consequence of a lateralisation process which is restricted to the right or the left hemisphere of the brain, while most learners appear to have the language function in the

left hemisphere of the brain. This can be correlated to a period of two years and probably ends around the age of adolescence.

It can be said that motivation also plays an essential role in second language learning. However, motivation can vary for numerous reasons, depending on learners' goals. It was noticed that the motivation for learning language varied between Ahmed and Huda. The reason is perhaps that Ahmed is enthusiastic about communication with British people, as well as being addicted to the British culture and community, whereas Huda's goal is to achieve a high education certificate so that she can obtain a satisfactory job when she goes back to her country. With regard to motivation types, Huda has an instrumental motivation (extrinsic) for learning the English language while Ahmed is different, as he has an integrative motivation (intrinsic) for learning the second language. However, despite the fact that Ahmed speaks with a high level of native-like fluency, Huda can have reasonable accuracy in terms of her grammatical competence. Therefore, Huda could be said to have a higher level of achievement in learning the second language compared with Ahmed, as her goal for language learning is more functional. In other words, Huda is more likely to intensify her efforts to reach her goals. To some extent, this is true; it is supported by Dornyei (1990, cited in Cook, 2008:138) who conducted a test of motivation in Hungary in a study examining English learners in a European environment, and proved that future careers are influential in providing learners with instrumental motivation. In support of this, Huda was almost accurate in the grammatical written test, whereas Ahmed was quite inaccurate in his grammatical competence, and unable to construct according to complicated grammar rules such as present perfect continuous, or perhaps was unaware of the correct usage. For example, Huda's sentence "*I have been studying an English language for three years*", is more accurate than Ahmed's, "*I have studying an English language for long time*". This belief about motivation is also supported by Carrió-Pastor and Mestre (2014), who argue that both instrumental and integrative motivation are vital, however recent research places more emphasis on the success of instrumental motivation.

However, this cannot be said to be always true, since Ahmed, who has integrative motivation, was most interested in communicating with native speakers when the opportunity came. He also tends to use and speak the English language even with his Libyan groups, while Huda, who has instrumental motivation, cannot speak very well and she is often hesitant, stressful and confused when she attempts to speak the L2. The reason may possibly be that she is concerned about

grammatical accuracy, and she may be anxious about the language structure before she utters; this could be attributable to psychological factors such as culture shock or social distance. For instance, in Huda's conversation, utterances like *"Learning English important"* and *"What does mean?"* show Huda omitting an auxiliary verb 'is' and simplifying the question without using a 'subject' in her speech. In support of this analysis, evidence is presented from the *acculturation model:*

> "According to the precepts of this model, acculturation (the assimilation of the cultural traits of another group) is the causal variable of SLA. That is, if learners acculturate, they will learn; if learners do not acculturate, they will not learn. Thus, acculturation initiates a chain reaction, including contact in the middle and acquisition as its outcome" (Gas & Selinker, 2013: 464).

To put it more simply, Huda probably does not socialise with native speakers, or perhaps does not have a desire to communicate with the target language group.

Another factor which could affect second language learning is personality, which may influence conversational skills or even listening and writing skills. It has been found that self-esteem can contribute to the success of second language learning. As an example from the case study, Ahmed probably has high self-esteem about learning in an interactive and efficient way, especially in British society. In other words, Ahmed is willing to communicate and feels confident about himself, and this has perhaps resulted in helping him to be a competent learner, particularly in terms of conversational skill. This is supported by White (1959, cited in Oxford & Ehrman, 1993:194), who defines it as "a self-judgment of worth or value based on feelings of 'efficacy', a sense of interacting effectively with one's own environment". In contrast, Huda may be prone to anxiety when speaking, since she is introvert as a person and does not enjoy interacting with native speakers or 'performing' in front of others. Moreover, she sometimes worries about her language structure while she is speaking, especially in front of native speakers. The most compelling evidence of this is presented by Macintyre (1995:96), who explains that "Anxious students are focused on both the task at hand and their reactions to it...[they] therefore will not learn as quickly as relaxed students". This is further supported by Oxford and Ehrman (1993:193), who argue that "The 'bad' kind of anxiety is known as debilitating anxiety because it harms L2 learners' performance in many ways, both indirectly through worry and self-doubt, and directly by reducing participation and creating overt avoidance of the language". However, this

may not necessarily be true, since anxiety can also affect L2 learners positively. For example, Huda could have positive anxiety, particularly when she has an exam. Because of her anxiety, she usually exerts extra effort before the time of the exam in order to perform successfully. This may perhaps have supported her in forming some basic grammatical structures efficiently in the written test. This is supported by Macintyre (1995:92), who argues that "To the extent that a given task is relatively simple, anxiety seems to have little negative effect and may actually improve performance through increased effort".

Some errors might be attributable to other cognitive and social factors. In fact, both learners produced errors in both the spoken and written tests, and some of these could be as a consequence of first language influences. As an illustration, both students might transfer rules and expressions negatively or even positively from their first language to the second language, as illustrated in previous sections. For instance, in Huda's statement "*I found problems in English language that I cannot understand them"*, she has probably transferred the rule of the relative clause from the Arabic language to the English language when she inserted the pronoun '*them*', which is in effect a difference between the two languages. In the case of Ahmed, possibly because of the similarity between the Arabic and English language rule relating to the passive voice, Ahmed applied this rule successfully in the written test.

Another factor which could be related to the developmental learning process as well as to the L1 is overgeneralisation. It has been claimed that L2 learners may over-apply and internalize rules of the target language that are not appropriate or even justified. In brief, L2 learners may attempt to develop their language by adding their own rules based on the amount of knowledge of the target language they have already acquired (Hummel, 2014). To demonstrate, Huda overgeneralised the rule of past simple when she applied the -ed rule, and instead of the irregular verb 'wrote', used "*I writted my report last week*".

Furthermore, both Huda and Ahmed sometimes produced fixed expressions in their speaking that they had acquired before. However, neither of them seemed to be aware of the grammatical morphemes to these expressions. The reason for this is probably that they may have heard these words in context and merely been able to comprehend the meaning without necessarily paying attention to the correct form. In Huda's example "*Could you do me a favour?*" and Ahmed's "*I'm afraid that's never come into my mind*", Huda may not be aware of the use of 'could', and whether a base form is needed after it or not, and Ahmed probably does not recognise the present

perfect form in that expression. Gradually, both of them can come to realise the grammatical use of such formulaic expressions through guided instruction and experience, and begin to process this information automatically. This supports what is proposed by both cognitive theory and the i+1 comprehensible input hypothesis mentioned above.

It was also noticed that Huda used alternative expressions in conversation with interlocutors so that her speech could be comprehensible for them. This proves what is claimed by the interaction hypothesis and ZPD concept referred to above, since she negotiated meaning by modifying words to carry on her conversation with support from other speakers. In the following example, perhaps because of Huda's personality as mentioned in the previous section, the interlocutor supports Huda when she speaks by asking her kindly "What do you mean by this?", "Do you mean X or Y?", or gives her time to respond to a question or uses gestures.

Huda: *What is your study?*
NS: *Pardon, what do you mean?*
Huda: *Uhuh...I mean what do you do at university?*
NS: *Do you mean my subject or my field?*
Huda: *Oh, yes...field*

With reference to social interaction, it was observed that Huda and Ahmed used their own strategies to help others to understand their words. Possibly because of the difficulty of some features of L2, both learners restated their own speech to approximate the meaning of those words, and sometimes talked round the word in an attempt to convey their message to native speakers. In essence, Huda used '*plane*' for 'airport' and "*I need to see a doctor"* for "I have an appointment". Also, Ahmed seemed to be more likely to use mime when there were complicated words that he could not remember. Tarone (1980) states that foreigner talk might involve negotiating clarifications when communicating in order to reach the intended meaning; this may involve using strategies such as paraphrasing, circumlocution or mime. Furthermore, "Communication strategies are most clearly defined…as 'mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared'" (Tarone, 1980:420).

It appeared that both learners used standard and non-standard English language in their conversations. Exemplifying this, both learners utilised standard language when speaking to their teachers or to staff at the university, but when at home, they used non-standard English. For

example Huda, when speaking to her teacher, would say "*May I help you?*" while at home she used expressions such as *"Feel free to do anything*". In short, their culture and pidgin language might affect their use of standard English when communicating, since this style of speech does not exist as an English norm. In terms of lingua franca and the socio-cultural perspective, this could occur under the effect of other people's language. The same pattern applied to Ahmed, as he communicated with professional people in a different style from the language he used with family, friends or even in the street.

With regard to English variations, pidgin language and cultural identity, it was found that Huda and Ahmed spoke English in their own accent, which may have had a negative effect on their grammar. The reason for this may perhaps be that each of them was exposed to English in different ways at their respective schools. For instance, Ahmed said *"When I was at British schools, I concentrated on speaking rather than on grammar…when I came back to my country, my teachers focus widely on grammar but I still have problems with it"*. In comparison, Huda said *"The Libyan schools stress more on grammar but not on speaking skill"*.

To conclude, the two subjects in the case study had experienced different styles of learning background. Building on the concept of a lingua franca, Ahmed is probably a successful communicator in terms of conversational skill, regardless of his weaknesses in language structure, whereas Huda is a successful writer in terms of grammar, despite her weaknesses in speaking. These differences reflect the range of factors and influences involved in the SLA process.

Conclusion

The purpose of this case study has been to concentrate on how learners learn a second language. However, because of the small scale of this research, it is difficult to make any assumptions. Despite this limitation, the study has compared the SLA processes of two learners from different perspectives. With regard to English as a world language, it has been seen that English has grown rapidly among world languages, both as a foreign and as a second language. Furthermore, in terms of English as a lingua franca, it has become the language of business and technology and continues to spread among non-native countries, being taught at increasingly early stages. Experts argue that English has begun to be spoken by many non-native speakers who mix their local languages into the English language elements. Consequently, it has been

estimated that different types of English will be spoken, one type at school or work, and one at home. Others claim that the language can be taught by encouraging local versions in English language classes. Whilst some native speakers might be unsatisfied by such alterations, at the same time, they may perhaps need to adapt to them, since the globalisation of English has become a fact of life. It has been predicted that speakers of the English language will reach two billion by 2050. Therefore, the demand for native English speakers will expand for some time in the future. With reference to second language theories, it could be said that cognitive factors and socio-cultural context both play an essential part in second language learning, as well as Krashen's concept of comprehensible input which could help to explain the SLA process of learners. Furthermore, it was clear that the two learners in the case study had been influenced by different factors and characteristics, and had utilised varying strategies in learning the English language. Because of the ongoing changes to the English language, TESOL teachers and trainers must continue to research and seek answers to questions which could be raised by schools, governments and industry regarding such issues.

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