



“An Error Analysis Study of Two Second Language Learners of English”

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Abstract:

Human beings have found many different means of communicating their ideas, opinions, attitudes and feelings. These means vary from spoken utterances to signs. There are several languages spoken widely by millions of people all over the world which are given specific names in particular regions such as English in America and Britain, French in France, German in Germany, Hindi in India, and Bengali in Bangladesh for example. Some of these languages are well recognized and used as first or second languages such as English and French. English language is as familiar as a currency to be used all round the world every day. The main reason for its popularity is the political and economic power of the people for whom it is the first language.

The importance of this paper is to present two case studies showing world Englishes. The aim of this study is to analyze the mistakes committed by learners of English through interviewing and observing them. The learners come from different countries with various dialects. The first one is from Libya and the other is from Egypt. Additionally, they might have been taught English by second language teachers. The cultural and the social background of each group might have effects on their learning. They might study different materials. Other factors might also interfere with their learning.

Keywords: First Language; Second Language; Learners; Error; Ability

الملخص:

لقد وجد البشر العديد من الوسائل المختلفة لتوصيل أفكارهم وآرائهم ومواقفهم ومشاعرهم. تختلف هذه الوسائل من الأقوال المنطوقة الي الإشارات. هناك العديد من اللغات المستخدمة على نطاق واسع من قبل ملايين الأشخاص في جميع أنحاء العالم والتي يتم تسميتها بأسماء محددة في مناطق معينة مثل الإنجليزية في أمريكا وبريطانيا والفرنسية في فرنسا، والألمانية في ألمانيا، والهندية في الهند، والبنغالية في بنغلاديش على سبيل المثال. بعض هذه اللغات معترف بها جيدا وتستخدم كلغات أولى أو ثانية مثل الإنجليزية والفرنسية. اللغة الإنجليزية مألوفة كعملة نستخدم في جميع أنحاء العالم كل يوم.

السبب الرئيسي لشعبيتها هو القوة السياسية والاقتصادية للأشخاص الذين تعتبر لغتهم الأولى. تكمن أهمية هذه الورقة في تقديم دراستي حالة تعرضان الإنجليزية العالمية. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تحليل الأخطاء التي يرتكبها متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال مقابلتهم ومراقبتهم. يأتي المتعلمون من بلدن مختلفة ولهجات مختلفة. هذه الورقة تناولت دراسة حالتين، الأولى من ليبيا والأخرى من مصر، بالرغم من إنهم تم تعليمهم اللغة الإنجليزية من قبل مدرسين للغة الثانية. قد يكون للخلفية الثقافية والاجتماعية لكل مجموعة تأثيرات على تعلمهم. فيدرسون مواد مختلفة. قد تتداخل عوامل أخرى أيضا مع تعلمهم. الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الأولى؛ اللغة الثانية؛ المتعلمين؛ الخطأ؛ قدرة.

Introduction

It is clear that over recent years the English language has become a lingua franca, which is “a language used widely for communication between the people who do not share the same first language or even the second language” (Harmer, 2007, p 13). Since the majority of English speakers are non-native speakers, the English language has consequently become a main and a key source of communication for most people. English has given more opportunities for people to achieve their aims. In this regard, Vistawide (2010, p 21) states that “learning another language opens up new opportunities and gives you perspective that you might have never encountered otherwise, personal, professional, social and economic consideration all points to the advantages of foreign language”. Therefore, English language has given wider opportunities for people in terms of their personal and career aspects.

It could be argued that the process of learning a language does not only consist of the reading, writing, listening and speaking components, but it is also a process which is related to other varieties of factors such as the way of thinking,

speaking and cultural habits, which can potentially affect second language learners. Hence, it was noticed that L2 learners may resort to these factors to facilitate their learning. Due to the impacts of L1, a natural outcome can be seen in L1 interference, influence and use of learners' cultural education in the L2 acquisition. Using these factors has become known as interlanguage or acculturation. According to Kosper& Blum-Kulka (1993, p3), "*Interlanguage has consequently been defined as the study of non-native speaker's use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2)*". Thus, using L1 as a resource to help learning L2 can have advantages as well as drawbacks. However, if this phenomenon is related to English, then we can conclude why English is referred to as "Global Englishes" or "World Englishes". It might be argued that learners tend to create these varieties of English because the English language is implicitly not an easy language to acquire or learn, and this is what was noticed in Piper's teaching experience, stating that "[she] taught learners from more than twenty different countries. Whatever their native language, these learners had a common complaint about English: it is hard to learn" (Piper, 2001, p 51).

In 1985, Kachru divided the diversity of English language speakers into three circles; at the heart of the circle, there would be native speakers where English is the mother tongue such as Britain, the USA, Australia, etc.; the outer circle comprises the countries where English is considered as a second language like India, Nigeria, and Singapore; the final part of the circle is the expanding circle where English is a foreign language as Poland and Japan. As evidently shown, the spread of the English language leads to the creation of many varieties; thus "new englishes" or "global englishes" (Harmer, 2007, p. 18). According to Rajagopalan (1999, p114) "*World English belongs to everyone who speaks it, but it is nobody's mother tongue*".

However, it can also be contested that there is no white or black judgement about the variety of world Englishes. Consequently, one cannot be sure that this variation might be acceptable or not to the native speakers and the real use of English language, although this variation can implicitly impact on L2 learning positively or negatively because it depends on L1. However, if one is to link the English language's emergence to its future, one can surely come up with two controversial points of view. Crystal (1997, p 2) gives an interesting take on the subject by stating that "*If English is your mother tongue, you may have mixed*

feelings, feelings about the way English is spreading around the world. You may feel pride that your language is the one which has been so successful, but your pride may be tinged with concern". Therefore, on the one hand it will be a significant device to communicate with new varieties of English emerging. On the other side, it might have negative consequences on the real identity of the English language and users. Crystal goes to argue that *"If, in 500 years, English is the only language left to be learnt, it will have been the greatest intellectual disaster that the planet has ever known"* (2003, p 191).

The main target of this paper is to examine two case studies. It will try to scrutinise the process of second language learning in terms of language theories. The selected learners come from different countries and speak the same language but with completely different accents. Using a learner who comes from Libya and another from Egypt, the case study will explore how both learners learn English according to a number of theories.

Literature review

The process of language learning has been a matter of debate, with Ellis (1986, p 4) arguing that *"second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex process involving many interrelated features"*. This process has surely witnessed various views and techniques starting with the behaviourist view of leaning which was challenged completely by other theories. However, none of these theories has been given clear explanation for this complex process. According to Lightbown & Spada (1999, p 45) *"Agreement on a complete theory of language acquisition is probably, at best, a long way off"*.

Behaviourism

Behaviourism was one of the initial learning theories which had influence in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States. Lightbown & Spada (2006) explain that language learning was viewed as the formation of habits, while the process of learning a second language was formed by the interference of these habits with L1, with new ones needed for L2 in behaviourism. Ellis (1990) argues that behaviourism supposes that when the first and target language are similar, the learning process of L2 should be acquired with relative ease; whereas when the structures of L1 and L2 are different, the learners then will face difficulties in learning L2. Known as the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH), it sheds light on the errors which are produced as a consequence of L1 interference. As stated

by Myles & Mitchell (2004, p 31), “When learning a second language, however, we run into problems: we already have a set of well-established responses in our mother tongue, the SLL process therefore involves replacing those habits by a set of new ones”.

However, it could be seen that the techniques of behaviourism theory are commonly used with many teachers still influenced by this approach in their teaching; however, it is now believed that there are other factors and issues that need to be considered in language learning.

Cognitive theories

As stated by Ellis (1997, p 32) “The obvious inadequacies of behaviourist explanations of L2 led the researchers to look towards an alternative theoretical framework”. These theories emerged as result of the drawbacks of the behaviourism’s view of learning language and had a view of learning a language that is completely different to that of the behaviourism. It suggested an alternative way of learning; paying attention and importance to the significance of the cognitive processes. The learner has an innate ability to learn the language (Chomsky, 1987). Researchers Chomsky (1959) & Krashen (1982) shifted their thinking to the importance of the innate properties in learning the language. As such, language learning cannot be seen as purely copying and mimicking and cannot be treated as learning a kind of behaviour.

Learning a language is a deep and conscious process which involves thinking and understanding rather than repetition and memorisation. Mitchell and Myles indicated that “[one] can understand the second language acquisition process better by first understanding how the human brain process and learn new information” (2004, p 95). Therefore, cognitive theory is considered as a learning theory in which the learners have conscious awareness in the process of learning the language.

The mentalist or innatism theory is based on the principles that one of the characteristics of human beings is their capability of learning the language. Cook (2008) refers to this ability to learn the language as language acquisition device (LAD), which Chomsky (1959) described as innate or biological endowment, and after reconsidering his idea, referred to as Universal Grammar UG. Another important concept coined by Larry Selinker in 1972 is *interlanguage*, which is related to the learner’s competence. According to

(2010, p 100), *“The idea was that learners possessed a special competence or (language) that was independent of L1 and also of L2, even though it might show influence from both”*.

Interlanguage is based on three origins; namely, transfer, overgeneralisation, fossilisation. First is language transfer, which is defined by Mitchell & Myles (2004, p 31) as *“The second language learning process involves replacing those habits by a set of new ones, the complication is that the old first language habits interfere with this process, either helping or inhibiting it”*. Hence, language transfer means that learners resort to their L1 to express something in the target language instead of L2. In other words, it is the influence of L1 on L2.

Benati&Vanpatten (2010) explain that the only problem in learning L2 is transfer, which has two main versions. The first is positive transfer where similarities between L1 and L2 facilitate learning. Thus, the previous knowledge of L1 will help in learning the rules and the structures of L2; on the other hand, negative transfer involves the differences. Moreover, because learners tend to use L1 structures instead of L2, this might result in ‘avoidance and overuse’, according to their L1 structures and rules. For example, Arabic learners have been found to avoid the use of articles especially the indefinite article ‘a’ because the Arabic language does not contain equivalent structures.

Secondly, overgeneralisation means that when the learners acquire or receive knowledge of L2, they will unconsciously extend it to other forms in the target language. Thirdly, fossilisation means that even when the learners get enough knowledge; they will not acquire the complete competence in the target language like the native speakers. Another possibility is that learners reach a stage when they might cease to develop, which might be related to the physical development in their brain. According to Cook (2003, p 87) *“ Fossilisation is a concept that refers to the end-state of SLA, specifically to an end state that is not native-like by end-state, we mean that point at which the learner’s mental representation of language developing system cease to develop”*.

Krashen’s Monitor Model (1982) was one of the prominent models of L2 acquisition. He was influenced by Chomsky’s theory of first language acquisition. Krashen (1989,p8) indicates that *“ Our ability to use second language comes mostly from what we have acquired, not from what we have*

learned” Krashen was interested in classroom language learning. He introduced his model in terms of five hypotheses, which are

- The acquisition learning hypothesis
- Monitor hypothesis.
- The natural order hypothesis
- The input hypothesis.
- The affective filter hypothesis

Firstly, with the acquisition learning hypothesis, Krashen (1981) tried to make a distinction between acquisition and learning. Acquisition is an unconscious process and is similar to how the children pick up their L1; while learning is a conscious process and involves understanding and attention. However, Krashen indicated that there should be a comprehensible input in order to acquire the language.

Secondly, the monitor hypothesis is the learner’s ability to correct themselves; where the learning system plays an important role as editor or monitor. However, Krashen (1982) used his monitor hypothesis to explore the learner’s individual differences. Therefore, he differentiated between monitor over-users and under-users. The former means that learners have conscious awareness of the mistakes ((accuracy), and the latter means the learners concentrate on conveying the messages (fluency). Moreover, how the learners monitor themselves is affected by different factors like experience, personality, and other learner’s characteristics, and also by the environment.

Thirdly, the natural order hypothesis refers basically to the fact that all languages are learned in the same order. Fourth, the input hypothesis claims that the learners acquire and develop only when they receive comprehensible input. Finally, the affective filter hypothesis means that acquiring language is happening through social interaction. Therefore, the affective filter about learners is also about the role of the people around the learner, who is the learner and the person who gives them the input; namely the feeling and attitude of the learner. Lightbown&Spada (2006, p 37) argue that “*affective refers to feeling, motives, needs, attitudes and emotional states*”; all these things should be taken into consideration in language learning.

The social cultural theory

This theory has been one of the influential models since 1990. It assumes the idea that the L2

is mainly acquired through social interaction. Cook (2003) argues that this interaction has a significant role in the internal acquired L2 knowledge. Lightbown&Spada (2006) discuss that cognitive development (mental process, thinking and even language development) arises as a consequence of output factor such as speaking and thinking, which indicates that what the learner says to others and what the others say to him/her will contribute to their language development. This process of utterance created by the native speakers and introduced to L2 learners is simplified and is called as foreigner's talk (Ellis, 1986). As stated by Cook (2008, p 230) "*language learning is social mediation between the learner and someone else during which socially acquired knowledge becomes internal*". However, this theory is developed by Vygotsky's(1978) social cultural hypothesis, where he introduced the idea of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which means that the learner's ability of achieving or performing a higher level because there is a support from an interlocutor to overcome a difficulty through interaction. According to Lightbown&Spada (2006, p 47) "*learning is thought to occur when an individual interact with an interlocutor within his or her zone of proximal development (ZPD)*".

Cook (2008) claims that Vygotsky's ZPD refers to the gap between the current developmental stages of the child and what s/he can do when assisted and what s/he can achieve without assistance. This gap is constituted by help from others and it will become part of the internal knowledge of the child. The child transforms the external social use of the language to the implicit knowledge.

The impact of social interaction and learner's characteristics in SLA

The process of learning L2 is different from one learner to another and the degree of success in acquiring and learning L2 is specified by different factors.

Part of these factors is related to the learner's characteristic; other can be influenced by the environment and social interaction. Ellis(1985, p 99) argues that *"Individual differences influence the sequence or order in which linguistic knowledge is acquired"*. These factors include intelligence, aptitude, motivation, attitudes and personality.

Intelligence: Lightbown & Spada (1990) discuss that intelligence is complex and people have several of abilities and strengths. Hence, some researchers have argued that intelligence is one of the influential factors of predicting success in L2 learning. Although it can be seen that intelligence is a general ability that human beings have, this ability enables the learners to acquire linguistic or non-linguistic skills (Ellis, 2006). The effects of intelligence might be felt obviously in other areas like mathematics, music and interpersonal relationships. As Vanpatten & Benati (2010) suggest, the role of intelligence appears least significant in language learning which focuses more on communication. Therefore, the role of the intelligence factor is still not obvious in learning L2.

Aptitude: Cook (2008) explains that aptitude might refer to specific abilities that learners have. Lightbown & Spada (2006) discuss that these abilities focus on the following components: identifying and memorising new sounds, memorising new items, understanding the function of words in sentences and deciphering grammatical rules in language. However, researchers have argued that successful language learners are not necessarily strong in all these aspects of aptitude. Another side is that this factor is more beneficial in an academic classroom. According to Krashen (1981, p 56), *"aptitude is important for formal situations such as classrooms and attitude is important for informal real world situation"*.

Personality: according to Lightbown & Spada (1999, p 75) *"a number of personality characteristics have been proposed as likely to affect second language learning"*. Personality has a major role in language learning, with each learner having his/her personality that differs from the others'. This difference makes one learner more successful in learning a language than another. As a result, a number of personalities that affect L2 arise, including:

- Extroversion vs. introversion.
- Inhibition vs. risk-taking

- Self-esteem vs. self-confidence.

These different characteristics might be helpful or obstructive factors in learning a language. For example, it is often argued that an extroverted person is well suited to language learning. Cook (2008) discusses that a social person is better in learning language than a shy, reserved person. He creates different occasions to communicate with native speakers. Ellis also points out (1986) that personality has a prominent influence in the process of acquisition of conversational skills, but not in the learning of literacy skills.

Methodology

The data was collected using different methods. Both the Libyan and Egyptian respondents were interviewed three times each. In addition, a sample of their writing was taken to investigate their grammatical errors. However, the interview instrument was the main and preferable technique to collect data because learners have enough time to talk. It also enables me to observe and identify each learner's characteristics.

Case 1- English in Libya

The only focus on English language in Libya has so far been on grammar-translation method and reading comprehension. Lessons were based on drills with the focus on grammar and structures. Arabic language was used widely in English classes by both teachers and students; memorisation was one of the basic techniques used in teaching e.g. (list of vocabularies). Moreover, in 1980, the English language was banned from the national curriculum because of political tensions between Libya and the West; all these factors contribute to the enormous difficulties facing Libyan students when learning English. In 2000 it was introduced a new curriculum based on communicative language teaching. As Orafi & Borg (2008, p243) *"It represented a significant shift, compared to the previous curriculum, in teaching methodology and materials and in the assumption about teaching and learning"*

Case 2- English in Egypt

Learning English language is extremely important in Egypt. It is taught from the early stages, and is one of the main subjects offered in schools and universities.

One of the reasons to achieve a high degree and a respectable career in Egypt is to learn the English language.

Case study analysis

Learner1: the first learner (Mona) is 30 years old and comes from Libya. Mona's first language is Arabic. Working as a dentist in Libya, she has learned English (as a foreign language) since she was ten years old. At the moment, she is studying an English language course at Sheffield Hallam University. By the virtue of my relationship with her, being a friend and neighbour, I noticed that she was interested in participating and giving information.

SLL process analysis

Mona is Libyan student who has started learning English since she was 10 years old in a private college. She was taught English as a main subject, on which she has been keen since she was young: "I liked it but the difficulty was with the pronunciation". Although she has spent a long period learning English, she still faces clear difficulties in pronunciation. As noticed through the conversation, she sometimes tended to spell the words before pronouncing them. However, she has clear keenness to learn English. She has been here in the UK since last November. Throughout the conversation, she was reiterating that learning English for her was a crucial element. Thus, it can be seen that her learning of English is due to a couple of motivations; namely, instrumental and integrative.

Mona was taught English in two completely different techniques and environments. The first environment was at the primary school, as she was taught the traditional way of teaching where the teachers follow the instructions in the books. She was being taught using the grammar-translation method in a very teacher-centred class. In every English class, she had to memorise between 20 and 30 new words, in a learning process established to pass the exam and move to another stage. She was not given the opportunity to use the language; thus all these signs indicate that she learned English in behaviourist way.

On the other hand, her experience in the secondary school was completely different as the teacher followed techniques which were based more on communication and understanding during the conversation. Mona said that the reason was that her teacher was graduated from an overseas country, and she

did not speak Arabic inside the classroom or even outside it. She also used games and a lot of communicative activities. Mona liked her technique and mentioned that her teacher's technique helped her a great deal when she arrived in the UK.

Because of her teacher's technique which based on communicative language teaching in terms of using communicative games, cards and other communicative activities.

Nevertheless, the following examples are samples of her grammatical errors. It will be analysed according to learning theories and the two different environments and circumstances where she learned English.

Mona has clear problems with the use of definite and indefinite articles. For example, when she described Sheffield City, she said: "*Sheffield is big city*" instead of "*Sheffield is a big city*". This error is known as omission because in the Arabic language system there is no indefinite and definite articles. Therefore, this error could be the result of L1 interference.

As Ellis (1997, p. 19) suggests, "*Both errors of omission and overgeneralisation are common the speech of all L2 learners, irrespective of their L1*". Behaviourism often linked this to the in contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH) which means that when the L1 and L2 are similar, learners should acquire the target language structures with ease; whereas in case of differences, learners should have major difficulties. Another type of error is the wrong use of the preposition e.g. "*the first day when I entered in class*" instead of "*the first day when I entered the class*"; in addition to the expression: *I will call you on around 2o'clock*" instead of "*I call you at 2o'clock*".

Mona also uses direct and similar forms in her native language, which can be clearly shown as L1interfernce. Lightbown&Spada (1999) argue that L1 interference has a major influence in terms of causing errors in L2 learning.

On a different occasion, when my interviewee was asked: "*how long have you been studying English?*" At first, she said "*I have studying English for ten years*"; then she said: "*I have studied English for ten years*". This answer can be analysed in terms of two factors. First, the overuse of the present continuous, as the learner seems to be confused between the two types of tenses, while the other aspect is related to the cognitive theory or what Krashen (1981) termed

“monitor hypothesis”, which refers to the learners’ ability to correct themselves and their mistakes; thus, the learner’s awareness of his/her language. Another point is that a learner’s ability to monitor his/her self can be affected by the experience of learning and people around them. As such, when Mona corrected herself, this might be attempting to associate with the first environment where she learned, as it was heavily based on the grammar-translation method. In addition, upon making a mistake, she used to be corrected by the teachers, which can make her very conscious of the utterances produced.

In general, in this particular case study, the impacts and effectiveness of the behaviourism theory in the experience of second language can be noticed.

SLA process analysis (second learner)

Ali is an Egyptian student who is 30 years old and is studying an English language course at Leeds University. He has been in the UK for eight months. He wants to complete his higher studies in the computer science. He has started learning English ever since the kindergarten stage and, to some extent, he speaks English fluently. Although he has some difficulties in pronouncing some words because of his heavy Egyptian accent, it was noticeable through the conversation that he was interested in mastering the English language. He stated: “I liked the English language before I started learning it”. Another point is that his parents did play an essential role in his learning of the English language, as it is known in Egypt that a well-salaried profession necessitates the ability to speak English competently.

In addition to the above mentioned reason, which can be considered as instrumental motivation, Ali’s subject is computer science which is heavily based on English language terminology. What is also interesting about Ali is that his father works as a guide tour and speaks English to a reasonable conversational standard. He sometimes accompanied his father on a number of trips, where he would meet many foreign tourists. He told me that he would find himself speaking English and communicating with them with conspicuous ease. All these factors have helped Ali to improve his English language, which he is consolidating at present by living with a host family in the UK. He has acquired this golden opportunity to practice the language and be in contact with native speakers on a daily basis. Ali stated: “the host mother helps me. She speaks regularly to me every night, and recently told me that the level of my language

has evolved significantly”. According to Lightbown&Spada (1999, p129), *“Long infers that modified interaction must be necessary for language acquisition. Development thus occurs through social interaction”*. Vygotsky pointed out that when the individual interacts with others or with his or her Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as result, learners collaboratively construct the knowledge. Although he has enough exposure to the English language, he still faces difficulties in learning English. The following are examples of some mistakes he did make during the conversation:

- *“When I arrive to the airport I meet an old friend who help me”* instead of: *“When I arrived to the airport I met an old a friend who helps me”*
- *“The first day I go to college”* rather than: *“The first day I went to the college”*

It can be argued that these grammatical errors are the result of a lack in the knowledge of the past tense, and if we investigate this according to the cognitive theory, it might be that the learner did not get enough comprehensible input when he was learning this grammatical point. Therefore, he might not be aware of the correct rules of using the simple past. As stated by Krashen (1981, p86), *“when the leaners are exposed to the input that contains grammatical features a little beyond their current level, those features are acquired”*. Krashen thus emphasises that “acquisition” is the result of comprehensible input.

Another possibility might cause this error is fossilisation, as it was mentioned. Even though Ali had opportunity to interact with the native speakers and he obtained enough knowledge in the process, he still made these types of mistake. According to Mitchell & Myles (2004, p. 102), *“fossilisation refers to the fact that second language learners sometimes seem unable to get rid of non-native like structures in their second language despite abundant linguistic input over many years”*.

Another example which might be also related to fossilisation as it was repeated many times is the use of the past form of the verb (*tell*) after (*want*) e.g. *“I want to told you”* instead of *“I want to tell you”*. Similarly, there was another error which was the wrong use of the article. Ali repeatedly misplaced the definite article *“the”* and omitted *‘an’* e.g. when he said *“It is interesting thing to make*

the friendship with English people” which should be “*It is an interesting thing to make friendship with the English people*”. If this sentence is translated into Arabic, it will give literally the exact content as in the Arabic language, which could be the result of L1 interference. According to Swan & Smith (2001, p. 205), “*the most common problem with the definite article arises from interference from the Arabic genitive construction*”.

Another aspect where Ali experienced difficulties is his pronunciation because of his heavy Egyptian accent. For example, in response to my question of what he thought of learning the English language, his answer started with “*I think*” pronounced *I CINK* (literal pronunciation). Another pronunciation issue noticed in Ali’s speech is the definite article [the] pronounced [za] in “*there is a big difference between the life in the UK and Egypt*”. Wahba (1998, p. 36) indicated that “*Egyptian learners face certain problem related to pronunciation; some of these are related to stress, others are related to intonation. However, most of these problems can be attributed to the differences in pronunciation between English and Arabic*”. According to the behaviourist theory, learners experience these problems as a result of first language interference. The learner uses the same phonetics system as in his native language. Brown (2007, p. 43) states that “*before the system of the second language is familiar, the native language is the only linguistic system in previous experience upon which the learner can draw*”.

It can be seen that the two learners were exposed to the English language according to different factors and circumstances. For instance, personality was one of the significant factors as it plays an essential role in learning L2. As such, one can obviously note that Mona is an introvert and quiet person since she prefers studying at the library even at the weekend, and does not like much interaction with others even in her home country, which can affect her speaking skills. Ellis (1985) noted that the process of learning L2 can be influenced by the social factors. Although she is self-monitoring and has the ability to correct herself, this trait in her personality could be ascribed to the first environment where she was taught using the GTM method. However, Ellis (2006) discusses that success in different skills depends on the kind of personality. For example, an extrovert learner will succeed in communication skills whilst an introvert will be more competent in skills like writing and reading.

On the other hand, Ali's learning experience is quite different from Mona. He is an extrovert person; while his sociable personality helps him to develop his speaking skill and creates an opportunity to talk with native speakers, which might also be related to the different environment where there exists a great deal of exposure to the English language. As argued by Cook (2008, p 230), *"Language learning is a social mediation between the learner and someone else during which socially acquired knowledge become internal"*.

Conclusion

In this case study, I sought to analyse and explain the errors which were made by the learners by linking them to the different language theories, although to some extent, it has been hard to make absolute judgements about the real reasons underlying these errors because, as it is known, language learning is an ambiguous issue. As stated by Ellis (1986, p.4), *"second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex process involving many interrelated features"*. Therefore, it has sometimes been shown that the process of learning a language might be a combination of different theories, which appears obvious with the cognitive and social- cultural theory. This paper also included the role and place of English language in the world and the concerns about the future of the English language.

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