

SLA UNDER CONSIDERATION: AN EXPERIENCE OF A SUCCESSFUL LEARNER OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract:

A second language learning experience is always discernible by its uniqueness. Each learning individual lives the singularity of this process in their own approach. The present research performs a careful analysis of the aspects that helped composing the successful English acquisition³ of a sole individual. This case study investigates which of the existent theories or hypotheses in the SLA field of inquiry are related to the facts narrated by the participant, and what elements most influenced this process. A study of this nature may demonstrate how profitable it can be for current studies in SLA to deeper explore single cases as the one herewith.

Key Words: Second Language Acquisition. Controlled and Automatic Processing. Attitudes and Motivation. Affective Filter. Self-Determination.

Resumo:

A experiência de aprender uma segunda língua é sempre reconhecida por sua natureza singular. Cada aprendiz percorre a unicidade de tal processo através de sua própria abordagem. A presente pesquisa

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³ Unless specially indicated, the terms “learning” and “acquisition” will be used interchangeably, both meaning a formal conscious process of reaching proficiency in a second language or an informal unconscious one

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realiza uma análise cautelosa dos aspectos que auxiliaram a compor a aquisição de língua inglesa⁴ bem-sucedida de um único indivíduo. Este estudo de caso investiga quais das teorias ou hipóteses existentes no campo de aquisição de segunda língua estão relacionadas aos fatos narrados pela participante e quais elementos influenciaram mais neste processo. Um estudo desta natureza pode demonstrar o quanto produtivo pode ser a investigação de casos específicos para os estudos atuais na área de aquisição de segunda língua.

Palavras-chave: Aquisição de Segunda Língua. Processamento Controlado e Automático. Motivação. Filtro afetivo. Auto-determinação.

Introduction

“How did you learn English?” This is perhaps, the most common question a successful English learner is asked. And answers to such question are anonymously told every day, rich experiences that could contribute to the progress of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies if analyzed through scientific methods. This one question is the starting point of this study, through which the participant was free to narrate the stories and facts that were significant for her, revealing the pieces of the puzzle that constructed her second language learning process.

The importance of language for human beings is undeniable. It is a common bond among all humans, and as appropriately defined by Cook (2001, p. 1) “Language is at the centre of human life. We use it to express our love or our hatred, to achieve our goals and further our careers, to gain artistic satisfaction or simple pleasure, to pray or to blaspheme”. Due to its importance and its fundamental role in people’s lives, language has been a core object of research in many different fields of study.

SLA is a discipline devoted to research some of the facets of language. It is committed to the study of the manner in which people learn one or more second or foreign languages, and it probes all the particularities involved in this process. Klein (1986) ponders that the acquisition of a second language, be it by everyday communication or by instruction, follows certain principles, and the intention of SLA studies is to uncover those principles.

⁴ Exceto especialmente indicado, os termos “aprendizado” e “aquisição” serão usados no sentido de alcançar proficiência na segunda língua, seja de forma consciente e formal ou inconsciente e informal.

Considered as a fairly young field of study, SLA has its origin around the 1960s as a sub-area of Applied Linguistics (ELLIS, 2005). The number of studies in this area continues to increase rapidly, concerning theoretical production as well as experimental research. However, it is common sense among researchers that there is still a lack of agreement on a single approach that best facilitates the acquisition of a second language, as stated by Mitchell & Myles (1998, p. 257) “On the whole, grand synthesizing theories, which try to encompass all aspects of SLL in a single model, have not received general support”, and that explains the demand for further investigation in this area.

Intense research studies have been done on the topic “Individual Difference”, and it has found that learners vary enormously in how successful they are in learning a language (ELLIS, 2004). And the differences are not only in the way learners learn, but in what they achieve (ELLIS, 1989). If language acquisition has such a singular nature, studies with emphasis on particularity have its significance for language research.

For this matter, in this investigation, a careful analysis of the language acquisition process of one individual that successfully achieved proficiency in the English language is developed. The corpus used for analysis in this research is a narrative written by the participant, in which her second language acquisition process is reported in detail, providing the necessary data to implement an appropriate study of her case in particular.

A deep investigation of the participant’s English learning experience will be performed using the considerations from different authors about L2 acquisition⁵ process. This analysis will reveal which of the main concerns in SLA studies are present in her experience, and which lines of thought are confirmed or confronted by the circumstances the participant faced. The determining factor(s) that seemed to most contribute to her learning experience is another feature to be closely observed.

Given the fact that SLA is a unique process for each individual, this study does not aim at providing answers to work as generalized truths, but wishes instead, to bring contributions

⁵ The term “L2” acquisition is used to make reference to “Second Language” acquisition.

for the understanding of such a complex process as second language learning demonstrates to be. While dissertating about language acquisition, McLaughlin (1990, p. 618) defended that “...single-case studies can be more valuable than carefully controlled laboratory research or large-scale multivariate analyses in furthering our understanding of the phenomena we are trying to understand”. Thus, in depth punctual studies as this will hopefully contribute to perform improvements, adjustments and/or to supply supporting evidence(s) for existent theory(ies) in SLA research.

Literature Review

For the development of the analysis of the participant’s L2 acquisition, theories and hypotheses that stand as some of the greatest contributors to the research field of SLA will be discussed in order to provide ground to this study.

The theories and hypotheses to be described below were chosen due to the nature of the situations found in the experience covered in this research. The considerations of different SLA authors about each topic will be thoroughly commented based on scholarly research.

The Acquisition/ Learning Distinction x Controlled and Automatic Processing Model

The acquisition/learning distinction terminology is one of the hypotheses comprehended by Krashen’s Monitor Model Theory (1982). This theory explains how L2 acquisition process occurs, and it is made up of five hypotheses: the acquisition/learning distinction, the natural order, the monitor, the comprehensible input and the affective filter hypotheses. This model can be considered one of the most influential theories in the post Chomsky period. For all the debate and critics this issue raised, McLaughlin (1987, p.19) postulated that this theory was “the most ambitious theory of the second language learning process”. And all research and discussion derived from the points he brought up to surface confirms Mc Laughlin’s thought.

Krashen (1982) states that adults can develop competence in a second language through two different ways: acquisition or learning. The main difference between acquisition and learning is that *acquiring a language* is an informal unconscious process, which can be

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compared to the process a child goes through when learning a language; this process is *rule-free*, focused on the meaning of a conversation instead of the form it bears (KRASHEN, 1981). Meanwhile, *learning a language* is a process guided by direct instruction, dealing with grammatical rules at a conscious level, including their memorization and identification of their violation. Krashen (1982) believes that fluency can only happen to *acquirers*, because they have a “feel” for what is right, they use what they have “picked up” through active communication, which means *unconscious acquisition*. On the other hand, *conscious learning* may be used only as a monitor to alter the output of the acquired system. In his words, the starting point for all language performance is acquisition, while learning can only be used as a monitor for output, e.g. when it is necessary to make a correction. In accordance with Dulay, et al (1982) and Krashen & Terrel (1983), formal grammar instruction shows restricted utility for the L2 acquisition process, since it foments conscious learning instead of unconscious acquisition.

This issue had already been discussed by other authors, so it was not totally new. However, when Krashen stated that these processes were totally separate – that learning could not become acquisition – it was indeed totally original (NUNAN, 2001). Krashen firmly believed that fluency was a property only acquirers could reach, and that learners could not shift from a non-fluent speaker status to a fluent one.

In contrast, Ellis (1997) ponders that both learning and acquisition can happen either inside or outside classroom. Ellis (1994, p. 361) argues that “this discussion of consciousness in L2 acquisition suggests that the distinction between conscious ‘learning’ and subconscious ‘acquisition’ is overly simplistic”. For Ellis (1994), it is hard to tell the difference between conscious learning and subconscious acquisition, since “consciousness” and “unconsciousness” are really subjective and difficult to be tested, turning the acquisition-learning distinction into a controversial subject in the field of second language pedagogy.

Nonconformably, McLaughlin (1978) claims that Krashen’s concepts of conscious learning and unconscious acquisition are not clear, since the ultimate test to confirm whether a process involves the latter or the former is analyzing if the learner is working on the basis of *rule* (knowledge through grammar instruction) or *feel* (knowledge by intuition of what is

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correct). McLaughlin (1990) affirms that two or more people can disagree whether the same experience is being based on rule or feel, turning his theory into a not testable one. As a result, the Controlled and Automatic Processing Model was developed in order to deeper explore the nature of consciousness and unconsciousness.

The concepts of Controlled and Automatic Processes were first developed by Shiffrin and Schneider (1977). These two processes are part of their theory of human information processing. The automatic processing concerns to the activation of a learned sequence of elements which are in long-term memory; this activation is initiated by certain inputs and then proceeds automatically. Automatic processing does not depend on subject control, does not stress the capacity limitations of the system, and does not require attention. On the other hand, “Controlled process is a temporary activation of a sequence of elements that requires attention, is capacity-limited and is controlled by the subject” (SHIFFRIN & SCHNEIDER, 1977, p. 1). These two terms were further adopted by McLaughlin, Rossman, & McLeod (1983) to establish their “Controlled and Automatic Processing Model”, which was an answer to Krashen’s theory. This model argues that “the distinction between controlled and automatic processing relates to the degree to which the skills in question have been routinized and established in long term memory” (MCLAUGHLIN, 1990, p. 621). That means what once was performed by controlled processing can turn out to be automatic processing domain. Both processes – controlled and automatic – can be conscious or not, and that makes the use of terms as “conscious and unconscious”, or “rule and feel” not very sharp. This processing model also guarantees to be empirically testable, what cannot happen to Krashen’s theory (MCLAUGHLIN, 1990).

Concerning the stages of learning process, McLaughlin (1990, p. 620) states the following:

This information-processing model assumes that, in the initial stages of learning, controlled processes are adopted and used to perform accurately and are in effect the “stepping stones” for the development of subsequent automatic processes.

That is a clear objection against Krashen’s assertion that learning does not become acquisition, and that the starting point for all utterances happens through acquisition. As

opposed to that, the Information Processing Model pleads that learning supplies the solid foundation necessary for acquisition to take place.

Theory of Attitudes and Motivation x The Affective Filter Hypothesis x Self-Determination Theory

Motivation can be decisive for a successful L2 acquisition. Research done on this topic covers numerous perspectives and standpoints. Gardner & Lambert (1959, 1972) pioneered in formulating a theory that explored the nature of motivation with specific ends to language studies. They developed the “Theory of attitudes and motivation”, introducing the instrumental and integrative motivation concepts, providing the attitude/motivation test battery (AMTB), which helps to define motivational factors (GARDNER, 2001). Crookes & Schmidt (1991, p. 478) assert that “The popularity of the integrative-instrumental contrast, together with the existence of standardized measures, has meant that this particular concept of motivation has tended to dominate all other ways of looking at the idea in the SL field”. The repercussion of this theory in the SLA Community is due to the focus on individual differences while learning a second language and all the cultural aspects involved in this process.

Gardner & Lambert (1972) made a distinction of the concepts of Integrative Motivation and Instrumental Motivation. Integrative Motivation is primarily concerned with the reasons for second language learning that emphasize identification with an L2 community, as positive attitudes toward the target language group and the potential or interest in integrating or interacting with that group. As specified by Crookes & Schmidt (1991, p. 472), “Instrumental motivation refers to more functional reasons for learning a language: to get a better job or a promotion, or to pass a required examination”. Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) showed that success in a foreign/second language is probably lower if the underlying motivational orientation is instrumental rather than integrative.

Motivation is also included in the Monitor Model developed by Krashen (1981), and it figures as one of the variables of his Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen (1982) supported Chomsky’s belief that language acquisition was a natural innate process, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis is in connection to this idea. In the 1960s, Chomsky developed the “language

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acquisition device” (LAD) concept. This idea was a rejection of the behaviorist theory developed by Skinner (1957), who preached that language acquisition was a result of habit formation through stimulus and response. Concerning LAD, Chomsky (1965) proposed that humans possess an innate ability to acquire language, which is inherent to all human beings.

The affective filter hypothesis was first elaborated by Dulay and Burt (1977) to illustrate how affective variables had an influence on second language acquisition processes. Krashen (1982) agreed with Dulay and Burt’s (1977) remarks and, additionally, he argued that an individual can only acquire a second language by obtaining comprehensible input and having affective filters that are low enough, so the input is able to reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition – the LAD – while raised affective filter could block input from reaching it. Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982, p. 46) explain that “The filter is that part of the internal processing system that subconsciously screens incoming language based on . . . the learner’s motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states”. This position shows how motivation is important as a variable that prevents the affective filter to block language acquisition.

Besides motivation, Krashen’s (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis include self-confidence and anxiety as affective variables that relate to success in acquiring an L2. Concerning these three variables, Krashen (1982, p.31) alleges that “those with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input, they will also have a lower or weaker filter”. That statement reaffirms that variables can positively influence in the process, but only for their connection to the increase of comprehensible input.

While Krashen (1982) believes that the filter prevents input from reaching the LAD, Gardner (1988, p. 113) affirms that the essential difference between his model of motivation and Krashen’s concept of the affective filter is that “...rather than assume that integratively-motivated individuals somehow find it easier to take in linguistic material, it seemed more parsimonious to hypothesize that they simply put more of themselves into the language learning task”. Gardner’s statement displays how the affective filter is not that much determining in the learning process, while the individual’s attitude certainly is.

Another remarkable contribution came through “Self-determination Theory” (SDT) developed by Deci & Ryan (1985), which involves the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, discussed by Brown (1994), Deci & Ryan (2002), Noels (2001), among other authors. The term intrinsic motivation refers to motivation from within the student (LUMSDEN, 1994), who learns simply because learning gives him/her a sense of satisfaction and self-concept, without any external inducement involved. In other words, it is about an action that is done for its own sake to experience satisfaction (DORNYEI, 2001). As postulated by Ryan & Deci (2000, p. 65), “Intrinsically motivated behaviors, which are performed out of interest and satisfy the innate psychological needs for competence and autonomy are the prototype of self-determined behavior”. Likewise, the authors mention that intrinsic motivation results in high-quality learning and creativity, and when intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than external prods, pressures, or rewards.

Oppositely, extrinsic motivation leads to engagement in activities that result in a reward, praise, or avoidance of punishment, a “motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end” (PINTRICH & SCHUNK, 2002, p. 245). While intrinsic motivation is self-applied, lying in the affective domain of feelings and emotional responses, extrinsic motivation is applied by others involving systems of rewards and punishments (SLAVIN, 2003).

Even though deCharms (1968) posited that extrinsic motivation is presented as a pale and impoverished form of motivation when compared to intrinsic motivation, SDT postulates that there are varied types of extrinsic motivation, and despite the fact that some types of extrinsic motivation do represent impoverished forms of motivation, others represent active and agentic states. Therefore, the authors of the theory relate extrinsically motivated actions to resentment, resistance, and disinterest or also to an attitude of willingness, reflecting an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a determined task, where it is self-endorsed and adopted with a sense of volition (RYAN & DECI, 2000). Consequently, individuals can certainly be pushed towards successful learning experiences by the power of extrinsic motivation.

Findings and Analysis:

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Acquisition and Learning x Controlled and Automatic Processes

Krashen (1982) stated that *acquisition* was a process similar to that of children learning how to speak, responsible for fluency and the way through which utterances are started. Meanwhile, *learning* happened through formal direct instruction, helping only in modifying output. Through the following excerpts, it is possible to affirm that the participant received formal instruction of the language, and that *learning* was not only a process through which she modified output. *Learning* was definitely the path she followed to reach full proficiency in the English language.

The teacher from High School... really focused on the grammar structure of the language ... I studied those grammar rules up to exhaustion...⁶

...and with the salary I received, I decided to pay for the English language course I dreamed of... Even though the book was considerably consistent, I used that in my benefit, making the exercises, including the ones skipped by the teachers...⁷

Concerning the way she processed information, it can be inferred that her learning journey began in her childhood, as noticed in the passages below:

At the age of eight, the dictionary was my passport to the new language, and I was curious, reading and carrying the small book everywhere...⁸

When I was attending the last grade in Elementary School, the pedagogical department assured that English was implemented only in

⁶ “A professora do ensino médio... focava muito na estrutura gramatical da língua... estudei exaustivamente as tais regras gramaticais.” – Our translation.

⁷ “...e com o salário que recebia, decidi que ia pagar o tão sonhado curso de inglês... Apesar de o livro ser bastante denso, eu utilizava isso ao meu favor, fazendo até os exercícios que eram dispensados pelos professores...” – Our translation.

⁸ “Aos 8 anos, o dicionário era o meu passaporte para o novo idioma e eu ficava curiosa, lendo e carregando o livreto para todos os lugares...” – Our translation.

that group... I thought that was a sign from heavens: the first group to study English in school would be my group.⁹

Considering she was an adult when she achieved full proficiency of the language, it is assumed that the information that was once part of controlled processing domain was routinized to the point of becoming established in long term memory, converting itself into automatic processing domain. The elements of language that were switching over between short and long-term memory (depending on her control to be activated, requiring attention to be performed, and involving capacity-limited performance) were, in fact, gradually helping her to develop subsequent automatic processes. When this transition was complete, the sequence of elements of language started being activated by certain inputs and proceeded automatically, a process that guided her to proficiency and fluency in the language.

As a consequence, using Krashen's terms but contradicting his theory: "conscious learning" did become "unconscious acquisition", while confirming the Controlled and Automatic Processing Model (MC LAUGHLIN ET AL, 1983) in this particular case.

Motivation

It is common to see teachers asking themselves what to do in order to motivate their students, due to the fact that motivated students seem to learn better and to learn more. According to Krashen (1982), motivation is an affective variable that is closely related to success in acquiring a second language, inasmuch as motivated students tend to seek and obtain more input, and that practice could be observed in the participant's experience through the following passage:

Every opportunity I had, I was with the CD player, listening and repeating the audio, and I felt a lot of pleasure doing that...¹⁰

⁹ "Quando fazia o último ano do Ensino Fundamental ... a coordenação pedagógica, cuidou para que o Inglês fosse implementado apenas naquela turma... Achei que aquilo era um sinal dos céus: a primeira turma que estudaria inglês na escola seria a minha." – Our translation.

¹⁰ "Toda a oportunidade que tinha estava com o cd player ouvindo e repetindo os áudios e tinha bastante prazer em fazer isso..." – Our translation.

Krashen (1982) also mentions self-confidence as an affective variable that conduces to a lower or weaker filter, which also results in an increase of input apprehension. Concerning the participant's conversation classes, she posited the following argument:

I wasn't ashamed to speak, to make mistakes. I was there to learn and I didn't care about other people's opinions.¹¹

These words make an explicit reference to how open she was to the learning process, and how her self-assurance corroborated with the success of this process. She was undoubtedly self-confident enough to produce output, and this attitude stimulated the intake of greater loads of input. As she possessed a low affective filter, she could benefit from all or most of the input received.

In the following excerpt, it is possible to infer that she also experienced moments when her affective filter was considerably high. She was running through a period of changes in school, which made her feel under certain pressure and apprehension:

In High School, things changed a lot. My third teacher was feared because she used to flunk many students... I was used to take high scores without making much effort and the first 7 in English... made me desperate. I studied those grammar rules exhaustively and English started being an even greater passion in my life.¹²

Krashen (1982) believed that raised affective filter could block input from reaching the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, especially when the student experiences negative feelings like fear. However, the passage above cannot confirm his theory. Even though the participant was afraid of her teacher and of the new evaluative process, she regarded that as

¹¹ “Não tinha vergonha de falar, de errar. Estava lá para aprender e não me importava com a opinião dos outros.” – Our translation.

¹² “No Ensino Médio as coisas mudaram bastante. A minha terceira professora era temida por que reprovava muito... Eu estava acostumada a tirar notas altas sem muito esforço e o primeiro 7 em inglês... me deixou desesperada. Estudei exaustivamente as tais regras gramaticais e o inglês passou a ser uma paixão ainda maior em minha vida”. – Our translation.

a challenge and as an even greater motivation to keep moving toward her goal of learning English.

It is also possible to notice traces of extrinsic motivation (see DECI & RYAN, 1985), where she found herself engaged in an activity that involved avoidance of punishment, representing the motivation applied by others in a system of rewards and punishments. Decharms (1968) regards extrinsic motivation as an impoverished form of motivation, and that does not conform to the participant's attitude. According to Ryan & Deci (2000) this type of motivation can as well reflect an attitude of willingness and be self-endorsed, as depicted in this case, where the task was adopted with a sense of volition.

The aforestated excerpt is also an evidence of the Instrumental Motivation she was moved for, since getting good grades was significant for her. Moreover, the Instrumental motivation is likewise pictured in the next couple of lines she wrote, where she describes her intentions and desires in regard to the target language:

...I wanted to understand the movies without subtitles, listen to music and understand immediately...¹³

As it has been portrayed in some of the excerpts previously mentioned, her motivation seemed to have started with a wish to learn the language for the plain purpose of study, and evolved for other functional reasons, as understanding music and movies.

In her narrative, there are no signs of identification with an L2 community, or interest in integrating or interacting with that group, which casts aside an Integrative Motivational orientation on her behalf. Considering that Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) relate lower chances of success in a foreign/second language when the underlying motivational orientation is instrumental rather than integrative, it can be stated that the participant's experience bring evidences of the opposite. Her motivational orientation was Instrumental, and that was strong enough to make her overcome the obstacles and achieve proficiency in the English language.

¹³ "...eu queria entender os filmes sem legenda, ouvir as músicas e entender de pronto... – Our translation".

As previously commented, SDT posits that extrinsic motivation may also move the person forward as much as intrinsic motivation can do. The following lines point to the presence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as promoters of her learning experience:

I confess that studying four years with my second teacher was somewhat discouraging. The old-fashioned approach to teach the English language in Elementary School was limited to translating song lyrics and texts... Even so, that did not upset me. I kept on studying with dedication, because I felt real pleasure in discovering each new word, in getting the correct pronunciation or intonation.¹⁴

I was really happy for being in the language school, I felt pleasure for the learning process offered by excellent teachers, I identified myself with the method and I developed so much affection for my teachers... nothing was painful or difficult, every task was performed with enthusiasm and the most difficult were tackled with the aim of overcoming.¹⁵

The participant demonstrated to be both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated and committed to her language learning process. Even when external conditions did not appear to be favorable, she seemed to have been moved by powers that came from within her, powers that pushed her toward persistence and provided her with the necessary feeling of pleasure to perform tasks and overcome challenges. As a result, achieving her goal felt massively easier in view of the satisfaction she found in the learning process itself.

Conclusion

¹⁴ Confesso que estudar quatro anos com a minha segunda professora foi um pouco desestimulante. O modelo engessado do ensino da língua inglesa no ensino fundamental básico limitou-se a tradução de músicas, tradução dos textos... No entanto, tudo isso não me abalava. Eu continuava a estudar com dedicação, por que eu sentia verdadeiro prazer em descobrir cada palavra nova, em acertar a pronúncia ou a entonação. – Our translation.

¹⁵ Eu estava muito feliz por estar no curso, tinha prazer pelo aprendizado que era proporcionado por excelentes professores, me identificava com o método e desenvolvi um carinho imenso pelos meus mestres... nada era doloroso ou difícil, toda tarefa era desempenhada com entusiasmo e as mais difíceis eram encaradas com o objetivo de superação. – Our translation.

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The richness of details obtained through this narrative analysis, has made it possible to watch the story taking place through the eyes of the narrator. Clandinen & Connelly (2000, p. 20) claim that “Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. Simply stated... narrative inquiry is stories lived and told”. The real case of this good learner of the English language enabled the perception of the elements that promoted her success in achieving the goal so many people have, which is becoming a speaker and user of English as a second language.

The participant’s report confirmed that her acquisition of the language could fully happen inside a classroom, being reached through formal instruction (see Ellis, 1997), contradicting Krashen’s (1982) allegation that competence in a second language is a privilege that can only be acquired by those who pick up the language through unconscious acquisition and active communication.

It was evident that the proficiency level she reached was not an overnight enterprise. This proficiency was earned on the way of a long process in which the participant became a practical example of how controlled processes can become automatic after being routinized to that extent (see SHIFFRIN & SCHNEIDER, 1977; MCLAUGHLIN, ROSSMAN & MCLEOD, 1983). This case demonstrated that long hours dedicated to study in and outside classroom, was actually providing groundwork for the mechanization and automatization of the use of English as an unconscious process, leading her to fluency, among other skills.

One of the outstanding points that led her to success was the fact that she was self-motivated and self-determined to learn, illustrating the way in which an individual can be endowed with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Through her words, she revealed herself as someone constantly interested in learning more, prompt to go beyond the tasks proposed to her, and compromised with mastering the language in all its forms, for it was at that point she had proposed herself to arrive. If the prototype of self-determined behavior is an individual that seeks to satisfy the innate psychological needs for competence and autonomy (RYAN & DECI, 2000), then the participant proved to be a fine example of such sort.

This case study aimed at providing insight into how this successful language acquirer made her way through the learning journey, and the findings revealed her accomplishment to

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be highly correlated to self-motivation, to the extended path persistently travelled towards automatic information processing, as to a fair level of self-determination and self-assurance which maintained low affective filters and high self-esteem.

Future studies on this matter might consider examining how learners manage to get the same results lacking one, some or all of those characteristics that led this participant to successful acquisition, as well as examining what ineffective learners lack, and how to foment essential characteristics as the ones discussed herewith in such individuals, so they become likewise capable to attain favorable outcomes in having English as their second language.

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