

# Theoretical Perspectives on Learning: Sunrise Program as an Example for Learning English in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region

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***Abstract---** Much has been said about learning as a framework for knowing things and increasing knowledge but little has been found to deal with theoretical perspectives on learning, especially English as second language learning (L2) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The significance of learning has long been ignored in Kurdish academic contexts due to a lack of knowledge of the English language learning theories. Linguistically, learning a language refers to a focus on syntactic rules and forms of grammar. Learning is a lifelong process. A gap has been noticed between the theory of learning and actual learning outcomes in the school contexts. The issue is that some students studied English language for years, but they still lack the means of effective and meaningful communication. This paper seeks the how of English language learning in the Iraqi Kurdistan school context particularly, to know which theory works well when implemented through the Sunrise program. The findings from the literature review revealed that different theories exist and each theory has different interpretations and procedures for leaning, especially L2 learning. Previous studies conducted by postgraduate scholars show that while the “Sunrise Program” including its supporting materials and activities, has been well-received by administrators and instructors, the learning of English is still in crisis as students continue to fail to demonstrate competency. Results revealed that students are restricted and not engaged in the actual communication. Despite Sunrise program being based on the communicative approach, the constructive learning is hardly implemented, but the theory of behaviorism is dominated in the current situation of learning English through Sunrise program in the KRI. In this paper, the qualitative method is adopted because it deals with the PhD theses and MA dissertations, literature, and resources that have been done for the research purposes in KRI. Besides the introduction, this study is divided into five further sections. Foremost is literature which is an overview of the concept of learning and learning theories. The third section addresses second language and linguistics perspectives. Section four is a methodology while section five is an overview of learning English through the Sunrise program in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. The last section is the conclusion, which summarizes the main points throughout this study.*

***Keywords---** Learning theories, English L2, Sunrise program, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION: THE FRAMEWORK OF LEARNING

Almost two centuries ago, various concepts of learning appeared in the field of education across the globe. Each concept emphasizes different theories and interpretations through studying, exploring and categorizing learning. The

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concept of learning has gone through various stages, and has made significant progress. However, the concept is still in a multi-paradigmatic phase, and remains rather vague [7]. Much has been said about learning as a framework for increasing knowledge but little has been found to deal with theoretical perspectives on learning, especially learning English as second language in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq(KRI). The significance of learning has long been ignored in Kurdish academic contexts due to a lack of knowledge. This means that teachers may not have adequate knowledge about English language learning theories. Fully exploring the concept of learning has been an interest area of many educators, psychologists and linguists, who have made great efforts to understand its process. There are different theories of learning. Linguistically, learning a language refers to a focus on syntactic rules and forms of grammar[23]. It also refers to a phrase or word and the connection between the sentences.

A gap has been noticed between the implementation of the relevant theories of learning L2 and actual learning outcomes in Kurdistan Regional Government school contexts. The real issue is that some students studied English language for years, but they still lack the ability to engage in effective and meaningful communication[28]. The current study considers the most important learning theories that have influence on language learning especially, English as an additional language. This paper seeks to know how English language learning is taking place in the Iraqi Kurdistan school contexts and which learning theories are being implemented through the Sunrise program. The goal of this study is to know which theory is effective in learning L2 in KRI. The findings based on the literature review show that learning, particularly English language in KRI is in crisis, students are restricted and not engaged in actual communication[22,28, 35].The role of teachers is still knowledge provider whereas learners are seen as a knowledge receiving “container”. The results found that students are encouraged by rote learning instead of being able to use the language in actual conversation. Despite Sunrise program being based on the communicative approach, constructive learning is hardly being implemented and the theory of behaviorism dominates the current efforts to learning English through Sunrise program in the KRI. In this paper, the qualitative method is adopted because it deals with postgraduate dissertations, literature and resources.

Apart from the introduction, this study is divided into five further sections. Foremost is literature which is an overview of the concept of learning and learning theories. The third section is concerned with second language and linguistics perspectives. Section four is the methodology while section five is an overview of learning English through Sunrise program of KRI. The last section is the conclusion with implementations, which summarizes the main points throughout this study.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF LEARNING THEORIES**

In recent years, learning has become a key issue in all scientific fields. Therefore, it has received great attention from many disciplines, including English language learning. Much work and attention has been devoted to taking all aspects of learning into consideration, to explain the process of learning by helping instructors to facilitate learning and teaching. For instance, “implicit learning” is acquired easily, without someone being aware of having learned[13]. Indeed, this sort of implicit learning often takes place in informal settings; for instance, in playgrounds among peers. By contrast, learning becomes “explicit” when one is conscious of what and how one is learning. For example, in second language learning, the learner’s attention is often focused on the forms and rules of language,

rather than its meaning [23]. Thus, there are different theories that have been proposed by different researchers, and each theory has its ideas and principles for learning particularly, L2 learning.

#### **A. *The Behaviourist Theory***

Following the above philosophical perspectives on learning, many theories have arisen in the last two centuries, each of which has had its own values and beliefs towards learning. The word “theory” has commonly been used by different researchers, who agree that a theory may have different explanations or interpretations by different people. The theories typically indicate the set of principles or ideas in the abstract, which provide procedures and explanations of how the theory is practically performing [34,3]. However, it must be borne in mind that each theory has its own values, beliefs and procedures related to its own era; therefore, no one theory alone is to be considered as superior to the others, as it depends on the context and the nature of the subject being learned.

Research evidence has shown that behaviourism as a theory became thoroughly developed in the 20th century, and it was dominant from the early 1950s to 1960s. Behaviourists viewed learning in terms of changes in behaviour. The many well-known proponents of behaviourism included B. F. Skinner, J. B. Watson and Ivan Pavlov [3]; who were concerned with how people know things, and how their behaviour is affected. According to behaviourism, various factors affect changes in learning, such as making changes in behaviour by using various techniques, including rewards, encouragement for correct behaviour, punishment and repetition. These techniques are usually called “external” factors, where subjects respond to stimuli which can be observed and measured. However, “internal” behaviour has hardly been measured [3], because behaviourism is considered as observable behaviour.

Learning in behaviourism depends on the continuous repetition of exercises which occur through dialogues; these include expressions, chunks and short sentences. In behaviourist theory, knowledge exists outside the mind, so people learn from outside by observing and repeatedly practicing activities. This type is called the social learning of behaviour, which refers to learning by observing in any context. The main theme is to learn by observing and watching the behaviour; for example, learners have to pay attention in the classroom. Research demonstrates that learning happens when behaviour changes; such changes could be in attitude, opinion or knowledge [32,25]. However, behaviourism has not been exempt from criticism by researchers. For instance, Noam Chomsky (1957, cited in [32]) criticized the theory of behaviourism of learning: as he believed that language is universal and innately programmed, children can generate new utterances, create novels and creative story, which they would not have heard before. He argued that the rules of syntax could permit the children to produce many sentences. Chomsky further argued that language learning through reinforcement is likely to be a slow process, as children learn without parents’ aid.

#### **B. *The Theory of Cognitivism***

This school of thought has a long history of seeking to reach the roots of cognitive development scientifically. Cognitive science has emerged since the 1960s aiming at discovering how people think and what is going in their mind. It aims to understand how information processing happens, and how it can be retrieved, kept and held in the memory [28].

Cognitive theory is a development of accumulated thinking and reasoning regarding language information processing, which represents the internal rearrangement of knowledge in the individual's mind [3]. According to Donald et al (2006), information processing refers to how humans rationally obtain, receive and process information in order to store and retrieve it spontaneously when necessary. In this way, the learner can operate mental tools and strategies such as information processing, perceptions and memory in order to store, retrieve and organize information. In the development of mental learning, the environment can play a significant role when children interact with their physical social environment. Their social interactions with adults, parents and the community are equally important for fostering cognitive development [28]. However, cognitive theory has been criticized for downplaying the role of society, context and the sociocultural environment.

### *C. The Constructivist Theory*

An abundance of varied literature has focused on learning theories, but little has been mentioned about constructivist theory. The theory of constructivism first appeared at the beginning of the 21st century, but it dates back at least to Piaget in 1950 [5]. Constructivist theory followed cognitive theory then flourished among researchers as a common ground. The constructive learning of knowledge is likely based on the interaction of people with their environment. The first prominent constructivist, Piaget (1955) [29], outlined the tasks for constructive learning, which facilitate learners to construct meaning from their experiences. The theory of constructivism describes learning as a process, where learning socially constructs knowledge and meaning; it is believed that knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. However, knowledge seems to be constructed based on how a person interacts with their environment in experiencing the real world. The social constructivist theory focuses on how people are socialized in the community for learning purposes; it also focuses on how meaning is understood through social interactions between people from different contexts and cultural backgrounds.

In recent constructivism, it is viewed that learners are responsible for their own knowledge-building through active engagement with other people and peers, by establishing social relationships with people around them. Based on this theory, teachers and instructors can play an important role in helping students to prepare for building their knowledge. For instance, they can show and engage learners in real activities, to help them become active learners in the community. Biggs and Tang(2007) focused on constructivism as a framework for learning, thinking and talking. They paid attention to tasks and activities which teachers prepare as real tasks for students, so that students achieve the desired outcomes. Many researchers believe that constructivist theory emphasizes that learners can be made accountable for constructing their knowledge for themselves by engaging in authentic activities inside and outside class. In constructivist theory, the tasks and authentic activities have to be well prepared before learning takes place. Social constructivist theory expands the beliefs of constructivist theory by stressing social contexts. This includes both individuals and groups, who construct knowledge collaboratively with one another, which helps to create a culture of shared meanings together. Higher mental functions are socially formed and culturally transmitted [37, 38]. Thus, constructivists believe that the context is crucial for social interaction.

A number of constructivists have proposed that learners themselves are key in the process of constructive learning. Learning occurs when learners actively engage in a situation that involves collaboration by formulating

questions, exploring phenomena and addressing and solving complex problems, as all of these emphasize that learners play an active role in building understanding and making sense of information [8]. Hence, learners should attempt to make sense of their own learning and grasp information in a way that is understandable and usable. According to Cruickshank et al. (2006), the key features of constructivist theory are that learners should engage in authentic learning, tasks should be concrete rather than abstract, and learning activities should be challenging. Students should reflect on what they have learned, and learning takes place in small groups and small teams working in the community. In this regard, children can develop their knowledge via active participation in learning by observation and experimentation.

It worth noting that one can find similarities and differences among all the theories elaborated above. Common goals can be noticed. Research shows that each theory can complement the others. For instance, memory holds information and retrieves it when needed. In all the theories, learners are likely to be active actors in the learning processes, such as when they respond to corrective feedback in behaviourism. However, some say that behaviourism is teacher-centred, and that the role of students is considered passive [19, 25]. Active participation can occur in different ways, such as at seminar presentations, round-table discussions, or in constructing projects. However, the learner's role is not considered passive [3]. In fact, the instructor's role can be varied and each theory needs students to be passive in particular aspects. For example, in behaviourism, the teacher is assumed to be knowledgeable about the subject area; in cognitivism and constructivism, the teacher should provide the context of the learning activity as a role facilitator and in sociocultural theory, the teacher should provide apprenticeship in the community, so that students can practice observation and gain experience through interaction and observation with others. It should be said that integrating various learning theories will optimize the process of learning, and will help learners to better understand the issues.

### ***The Sociocultural Approach***

Socioculturalism developed under constructivist theory, which was derived from the sociological and economic writings of Marx in the 19th century. As an approach to learning and teaching, it emerged in the 20th century. This approach has been considered as one of the most imperative, as it places great emphasis on language learning and people's mental functioning, as a greatly mediated process of learning. This is organized by using cultural artefacts and activities through interaction.

One of the pivotal features of sociocultural theory is learning, which can take place effectively via social activity in authentic situations where the meaning is derived through language use within the context [37]. There can be an interaction between social, cultural and biological elements in learning language. Furthermore, the theory embraces the development of human cognitive and mental function through people socializing and integrating within a society. The theory of the sociocultural approach elucidates that second language learning should be similar to first language acquisition, and it explains the ways in which sociocultural theory affects L2 learning. Research indicated that the implementation of the sociocultural approach (SCA) is crucially important in assisting learners to develop their sociolinguistic competence. For example, students could learn how language rules are used in different social

contexts, via social interaction [20]. It has been evidenced that interaction through communal activity takes place when individuals are interacting with each other [25,21].

With regard to the sociocultural perspective, this view is counterbalanced between the two aforementioned views, as it tries to put emphasis on both cognitive and social aspects of language learning. This theory was first mentioned and initiated by Vygotsky, and was soon after supported by many other researchers, such as Lantolf (2000). In this theory, second language students are encouraged to think and speak in the target language, because language and thought are closely connected. Sociocultural theory as an approach can be used in the context of English being learnt as a foreign or second language (EFL or ESL); this is because, except for English as SL learning, English will not be used as a means of communication in people's daily lives. According to sociocultural approach, well-organized activities in language learning, for example, play a central role in enhancing the mind, and they help L2 learners to observe how their mind is growing in social interaction activities. Additionally, many other activities such as storytelling can be used, in which instructors present the ideas in a picture, and the students will discover the intended meaning in the classroom with their peers [14].

Sociocultural approach is somehow a theoretical perspective focusing on the significance of society and culture in enhancing language-learning. Researchers noticed that when specifically learning English in the foreign context, students have little opportunity or even no scope to use English in social situations [28]. This is due to English being most often used as means of communication in social settings, whereas they are learning English through classroom instruction and the use of audio-visual materials, for academic purposes only.

### ***Cooperative Learning***

Cooperative learning is a kind of learning that involves students learning in small groups. Cooperative learning is derived from the humanistic ideas of learning [10], and usually involves team-based learning. Students learn collectively: they are usually rewarded for their work accomplishment and are encouraged to learn; and learners are enabled to reach the common goals either individually or collectively. This method is generally called "all for one, one for all" [10]. In cooperative learning, the diversity of students is considered, such as their race, academic level and gender. This causes the learners to work together and learn from each other. Research has shown that cooperative learning has been worthwhile amongst enthusiastic students [9]. However, though cooperative learning helps students' learning, the knowledge is not revealed immediately: for instance, maths and science need experimental, practical methods for learning. This method is used to seek knowledge that cannot be found easily.

### ***Discovery Learning***

Discovery learning is viewed as one of the most recent approaches to learning; it has been defined as the process whereby a learner seeks knowledge by themselves. Donald and his colleagues defined learning inquiry as "learning that takes place when students are asked to find out something for themselves" [10]. This means that instead of teachers telling the students the correct answer to the question, the learner tries to find out the answer by themselves. Research evidence indicates that inquiry-based learning helps students to participate in interaction, because this enables many ideas to appear while discovery is occurring. Students use scientific methods, such as recording and

observation. Inquiry learning should be used when learners are able to think independently, in order to meet educational needs, based on the instructor's objectives. Moreover, many researchers have suggested that instructors should ask learners to write reports, in order to reflect for themselves [8]. Therefore, discovery learning holds the premise that students will be competent in thinking for themselves.

### ***Learning Autonomy***

The idea of autonomy first appeared among the ancient Greeks, together with the earliest expression of democracy [24]. In the political context, the concept of autonomy is understood as "the independence and self-determination of the community in its external and internal relations" [24]. The emergence of autonomous learning has become necessary due to the speed of technological development and new education practices.

In the field of education, the concept of autonomy refers to learners' ability to take responsibility for their own learning. However, in many non-native contexts, this has not yet been supported by research evidence. For example, many high-school students depended on their teachers and syllabus. Research conducted by Xhaferi (2011) showed that learner autonomy is a new trend in education, where the focus is placed on the student's engagement on their own. Learner autonomy seems a new perspective in education, and it gives students some capacity for detachment, critical reflection, and taking greater charge of themselves [26]. In order to achieve good language learning autonomy, learners should have some essential skills, such as the ability to use computers to find information, using dictionaries, and critically asking teachers questions [6]. Being an autonomous learner is not an easy task; it requires comfortable environments with facilities such as buildings, learning resources including electronic libraries, silent zones, and guidance from their tutors and family [15,8]. Providing a safe zone for learning is vital, because this allows students to feel self-directed and much more responsible for their own learning and development. If such provisions are available, students will not have obstacles to their lifelong learning [40].

Learner autonomy for second language learning means students discovering their own strategy and learning resources, and formulating a strategy and action process. Providing a silent zone and creating a learning community through a structured room for studying are pivotal for interaction between students. The students may perform collaboration, group working and learning from each other, which can be done in the absence of instructors. Dörnyei (2001) [11] argued that learning autonomy can be enhanced by a resources-based approach which emphasizes independent interaction with learning theories. However, autonomous learners are often confused with independent learners. Ryan and Deci (2002) [31] made a distinction between the two terms, stating that "autonomy is often confused with, or melded together with the quite different concept of independence, which means not relying on external sources" (2002, p.8). Learners' voices and strategies should be heard, because some factors can hinder becoming autonomous: for example, lack of a successful plan, lack of experience, lack of motivation, no access to a university library, and limited independent study.

### **III. SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES**

As different learning theories have been elaborated by different researchers in various ways and eras, each theory can be implemented within different content areas, such as English as L2 learning. Theories of linguistics and cognitive psychology have their own approaches to second language learning [32]; indeed, there are many external

factors that can hinder or pave the way for learning an L2. For instance, according to Krashen's (1982) perspective, learning a language occurs when there is a focus on the syntactic rules and forms of grammar. The grammatical rules often come first, and the rules of L2 are usually explained explicitly. Schmitt (2010) points out that linguistic input works well in changing the learner's developing competence if the social context assists this. Learning is viewed by Krashen as an awareness process of learning the rules and forms of a language. In this regard, Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that young learners and older people seem to be different in learning language, even in spoken communication. It has been argued that although learners may have different biological, sociocultural and economic backgrounds, they are all equal when learning at the same stage. This is because language is considered to be universal, regardless of learners' sociocultural backgrounds. Language learning is divided into three types: the category of environment describes the learners' engagement with the context of language use; the second category is the naturalistic theory, which suggests that all humans have the innate ability to learn a language, and to recognize and use the grammar; while last categorization includes social interactions, where foreign language learning is viewed as the interaction between people.

There are various aspects, such as biological, sociological and psychological factors, that influence learning English as a second language; many of these play a major role in learning. Learners' different age groups also affect learning. However, from a sociocultural perspective, gender and social classes are also influential. For instance, research shows that females grasp language much faster than males. Additionally, learners are socially influenced, as social relations with peers and the community influence language learning. Furthermore, standard materials, classroom management, socioeconomic and social classes have a great influence on L2 learning. As for psychological perspectives, factors such as emotion, attitude and personal intelligence are also important. For example, anxiety to some extent can either positively or negatively have an influence on L2 learning, as this factor may activate or shut down the mind. Cognitive psychologists feel that the mind is a major mechanism for holding, processing and retrieving information. As has been mentioned previously, learning can be a process of increasing knowledge, in response to a need that arises in any place at any time. Research attests that learners have to be exposed to a learning subject.

As mentioned earlier, the conceptual approach to language learning has been described in terms of various learning behaviours. Evidence suggests that children have different approaches to learning, such as initiative, curiosity, engagement, persistence, reasoning and problem solving. There are two main approaches to learning in an educational context, namely "surface" and "deep" learning. Surface learning is reproductive, where students reproduce through rote learning and memorizing contents, while deep learning involves learning things meaningfully. This meaningful learning is usually done by linking previous knowledge with the new information. In the deep learning approach, students' interest plays a vital role in making the best sense and realizing the target subject in more detail [4, 27,1]. Conversely, in surface learning, learners are given tasks and contents, but learners might not grasp the point that the author makes; whereas deep learners try to relate the new to the existing knowledge.

#### IV. METHODS

This section deals with how this paper is constructed and organized. The researchers used a number of PhD and MA theses; therefore, the qualitative method is utilized since it deals with literature and resources that have been done for research purposes in KRI. Additionally, it helps researchers to analyze findings and discussions thoroughly[12].

#### V. L2 LEARNING IN KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ: DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS

Almost two decades ago, the Kurdistan Region Government (KRG) of Iraq developed an educational system in the region since the KRG values education, especially English language learning. The educational policymakers of KRG considered upgrading educational programs; they felt that reforming the system of education was necessary for the region.

In response to these considerations, the KRG Ministry of Education (MOE) undertook significant steps in 2005 to reform the educational system by introducing a new curriculum, “Sunrise”, for English language instruction in grades 1 – 12. “Sunrise” is designed and published by Macmillan Company in cooperation with the KRG MOE and is based on the communicative approach and constructive learning theory [36]. The curriculum includes a student’s book, activity book and teacher’s book which aims to prepare students for effective communication utilizing the four integrated language skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

To implement all language skills equally, more hours may need to be allocated for the curriculum. Therefore, in KRG schools, the lessons were enhanced. For example, one third or more units of an entire week are dedicated to the English language[36, 35]. The reason behind the increase in the number of English language units is that the English language is vital in the areas of communication, science, technology, trade and, therefore, necessary for the prosperity of students in this era. Accordingly, the English language classes were added daily and weekly as explained in the table below.

Table1: KRG’s K-12 Lesson Instructional Time Allocations for the Sunrise Program(Grades 1-6)

<i>Single shift school per week</i>		<i>Single shift school per year</i>		<i>Grade levels 1-6</i>
1 week	6days	1 year	170 days	693 hours per year
1 session per day	40 mi			

SOURCE: Adapted from RAND, based on the Ministry of Education’s Office of Statistics school data, 2007–08.

However, the number of instructional hours offered by double shift public schools is less than single shift public schools as seen in table2 below.

Table2: KRG’s K-12 Instructional Time Allocations for the Sunrise Program (Grades 6-12)

<i>Double shift school per week</i>		<i>Double shift school per year</i>		<i>Grade levels 6-12</i>
1 week	6days	1 year	170 days	539 hours per year

1 session per day	35 mi			
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SOURCE: Adapted from RAND, based on the Ministry of Education's Office of Statistics school data, 2007–08.

The number of instructional hours allocated in both single and double shift schools are likely less than the OECD standards average 794 hours recommended for yearly periods in public schools, which leaving no room for constructive learning in school classrooms. Therefore, fewer allocated hours compels the instructors to be teacher-centered[36].The Sunrise program was designed to develop students' communicative competence and force them to use the target language in social contexts. If the principle of social theory is not applied properly, it may cause difficulty in communicating effectively. Regarding this, Sofi-Kaim argues that *“The Sunrise program does not promote communicative competence. It may provide students with linguistic competence. Yet, Kurdish students need to know when and how to use the language functions, and what register to use. These competencies are attained through communicative activities. Lack of communicative activities in the Sunrise curriculum leaves Kurdish English learners unequipped to discover when and how to use speech appropriately”*[35].

Additionally, Muhammad and his colleagues state that *“ Sunrise 10 and 11 curriculum achieved the Total Quality Standards [according to their study], but this achievement does not guarantee that all the students learn English Language smoothly”*[17].

Although many PhD and MA studies in the region have been conducted for research purposes, most of them such as Sherkaway, (2012), Khider,(2012) and Mawlood (2012) [18] have positive views of the Sunrise program. According totheir research findings, most of the instructors and students have positive attitude towards of the contents and subjects offered by the Sunrise program for learning English as L2. They have also found that Sunrise program has not been implemented successfully due toa number of reasons. First, most of the teachers do not follow the recommended teacher's book. Secondly, the program itself pushes the notion of student-centered learning, but inreality, the students have been playing only a minor role in learning a language. According to Sherwayay (2012), Sunrise programis based on the constructive learning theory, which integrates all the language skills of speaking, reading, writing and listening, but the two most important skills, speaking and listening, have probably been ignored by both teachers in the classroom and national exams because the oral test is not included in the national exit exams.

A study conducted by Hamadameen(2012)[16] entitled, *“Curriculum, Syllabus and Approaches to Course Design with Reference to Sunrise”*, found that Sunrise program is not well-applied due to overloaded classes. Similarly, Ahmed Balakey (2012) carried out research under the title, *“The Assessment of the Implementation of Sunrise Program in Erbil City and Soran District”*. The findings obtained from her study show that the level of students' proficiency in speaking is unsatisfactory. This means that students are still unable to communicate effectively. The reason would be that the teachers emphasized grammatical rules and forms rather than communication in meaningful and authentic situation. Authentic tasks have been ignored and that is why, when it comes to genuine communication, learners are unable to communicate effectively. Like Biggs and Tang(2007) mentioned earlier, tasks and activities facilitate language learning since the tasks provide students opportunity to communicate with peers. Task-based learning refers to tasks and authentic activities that are designed to meet communication needs. In task-based learning, the activities are usually real and meaningful, emphasizing the

processes rather than the output [30]. The goals of meaningful tasks are to find solutions, overcoming challenges, practicing the language and encouraging critical thinking. The primary focus is on meaning. Indeed, tasks should be designed in a way that makes learners think logically and critically; this will provide them with an environment that encourages language use. Learners communicate with each other through collaboration, debate and discussion, indicating they are able to communicate effectively. Vygotsky(1987) emphasizes the idea that classroom tasks should reflect the social nature of interaction and collaboration for facilitating language skills development. Obviously, Sunrise program requires the CLT approach which was developed under the Constructive Learning Theory.

CLT as an approach focuses on communicative competence and task-based learning. It is mainly based on language usage in an appropriate context. It requires group work in the classroom as well as understanding of social sense developed from authentic social experiences as mentioned in the constructive learning theory [30]. Research has found that the CLT approach has been implemented poorly in the Kurdistan school context [2]. Sofi-Karim, (2015), has also confirmed that the overcrowded class size, insufficiently trained teachers, lack of allocated enough hours for teaching and overlooking communication skills are the major reasons for being unsuccessful pregame because Sunrise can never be fully beneficial if students are not engaged in the classroom tasks based on authentic social situations.

Furthermore, Sunrise invites students to be autonomous in learning, but the students are still unable to construct their own knowledge socially. This means that learning a language in KRI is still based on the “banking concept”. In other words, the teacher is the source of knowledge provider and the learner is like a “container”. The current system of education in schools does not allow learners to think critically. According to Vernez et al., (2014) Sofi-Karim, (2015), and Wahab, (2017) [39], the students are encouraged to focus on rote learning, random memorization, coping and pasting for written exam. Thus, these approaches encourages surface learning only. Unexpectedly, constructive theory has rarely or never been implemented in the KRG school context. A number of teachers may lack sufficient knowledge of various learning theories to be able to determine which theory works best for their instructional content. Hence, if the system of education does not encourage constructive learning, the knowledge may be wasted, as many learners have experienced.

It can be argued that providing students more relevant input through communicative tasks in social contexts can provide better opportunity for learning a second language, by focusing on meaning rather than forms. Lack of meaningful social interaction opportunities can be a major impediment to learning L2. Additionally, it can be further argued that the major factor hindering effective communication is the public examination of the KRG since these examinations encourage behaviourism, inspiring achieving a minimum pass grade on examinations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This paper has highlighted various theories for learning English as a second language. This goal of this research is to determine which theory or theories are effective in teaching English as a second language in the Kurdistan Region. The conclusions and implications can be summarized as follows:

1. Findings show that learning has a long history, and it is a lifelong process, and each theory holds different principles and procedures which makes the others more complete, depending on the subject and content area.

2. Constructive Learning Theory includes cooperative, discovery, autonomous task-based learning and sociocultural approaches which encourage communicative competence and deep learning while encouraging students to use English in social situations

3. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Sunrise program has been implemented for grades Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade (K-12) and utilizes the communicative approach which encourages integrated language skill development.

4. The Sunrise program has not been fully implemented in Kurdistan and education in the Kurdistan region remains in crisis as students are restricted and not engaged in effective communication.

5- The listening and speaking (communications skills) tests are not found to be implemented fully by both school instructors and national exit examination.

6- Concerning the current situation for learning English, the behaviorism theory dominates classroom instruction and content presentation in the classroom is still teacher-centered.

7- Constructive Learning Theory (student-centered), which encourages group work, authentic task activities, autonomous learning and socializing are rarely, if ever, used.

8- Despite the KRG's efforts to improve education, especially through the Sunrise program, the listening and speaking skills of students have not improved.

9- Constructive Learning Theory has failed to improve outcomes due to large class sizes and insufficiently trained teachers who are unfamiliar with various theories of learning, particularly CLT.

#### **A. *Implications***

Despite the many initiatives undertaken by the KRG, education has not improved. The quality of instruction and learning of the English language must be taken into consideration as they are building blocks for learners' future development. The KRG should practically encourage the notion of student-centered learning in all government public schools. Student-centered instruction means one can construct knowledge for one's surroundings, thereby creating a learning ecosystem. The ecosystem for learning a foreign language involves students, contents, culture, technology and strategy. Once the learning ecosystem is built, the student-centered approach will be reflected inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, by creating a learning ecosystem, deep learning, critical thinking and soft skills will be stimulated. The KRG should take fundamental steps towards enhancing teacher development by getting them involved in workshops and training courses. The government must be sure that students' learning outcomes in all language skills and teachers' professional growth are attainable, measurable, accurate and sustainable in all KRG's public schools.

Further research into the impact of social factors, such as income, politics and school environments, to determine how these factors impact learning, particularly concerns the English language in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

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