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**Sadia Belkhir, ed. 2020. *Cognition and Language Learning*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp xiv + 157. ISBN 978-1-5275-4482-6**

The volume under review is a collection of nine papers originally presented at a conference organized by the editor of the volume in February 2019 at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou. As pointed out by the editor in the introductory chapter the main motive behind the volume was to explore the link between cognition and language in the context of (English) language teaching and learning, a topic which of late has been the object of much research. The editor does not reveal any specific reason for the sequence in which individual chapters come nor is there any grouping in terms of the similarity of their topics, probably due to a wide range of topics discussed.

All the chapters that follow the introduction but one involve learners of English as a foreign language. Their linguistic background is very interesting and has been focused on in some of the contributions. In addition to the majority of subjects participating in the studies reported in individual chapters having Kabyle or Kabylia as their mother tongue (which is one of the Berber languages spoken in Algeria, mainly in the spoken in the north-east part, i.e. the province of Kabylia) they also speak Algerian Arabic, French, as their first foreign language, and English as their second foreign language. All the subjects were students at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou, mostly majoring in English.

Another respect in which the chapters in the volume are unified is that they all, again except for the introductory one, follow the more or less identical schema, which is not surprising in view of the fact that they are empirically oriented. The introduction is followed by sections with literature overview and theoretical background, followed by a section on methodology, after which come results and the discussion, topped by conclusions. The editor is to be commended for asking all the contributors to include an abstract and keywords at the beginning of their chapters (although some of the abstracts are quite profuse, going way beyond the usual one hundred to two hundred words).

All the contributions avail themselves of the same experimental design. This is at the same time an advantage, but also a possible disadvantage. The fact that the same model is followed makes the volume more coherent, but at the same time the exclusion of other methods, perhaps as a stand-alone methodological solutions, or as complementing the experimental approach may have robbed the contributors of some insights. It should be also mentioned that this consistent insistence on experiments would have been more justified had the pool of available subjects for experiments been somewhat larger. Both of these limitations cause the conclusions in many cases to be cautious and tentative, as evidence by the frequent use of hedging on the part of authors.

As mentioned above, the first chapter is an introduction to the volume by the editor. It outlines the relationship of language and cognition against a timeline with some milestones in the development within the field of language learning studies, from behavioural to cognitively-oriented theories. As the editor sums it up, the chapters in this volume “jointly represent current forward-looking research in the interdisciplinary field of cognitive linguistics and education.” This is duly reflected in the range of topics discussed in individual chapters.

In Chapter 2, i.e. the first research article in the collection, Kamila Ammour attempts to examine the relationship between metacognitive awareness and strategies deployed during reading of narrative texts by Algerian learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the university level. The chapter is an empirical study based on data elicited from students with the help of a questionnaire. The analysis of their responses revealed that a range of strategies were employed while reading narrative texts that come in two general types, some of them have to do with pre-reading planning, the rest being various word-attack strategies. The analysis also showed students do not feel to be conscious enough of their process of constructing meaning from narrative texts. Their reading strategies seem to be limited to the level of words level and restricted to the literal meaning of texts, which is interpreted as likely to hamper their achievement in critical reading comprehension. Ammour concludes by suggesting that instructors might be able to raise their students’ metacognitive awareness level if they: a. give explicit tips on why and how to use reading strategies; b. help EFL students focus on procedural knowledge; c. concentrate on the generic structure of texts, and d. vary the reading strategies as appropriate to the text type in question as well as to the objective of the task.

Fatima Zohra Chalal investigates in Chapter 3 vocabulary attrition among native adult Kabyle multilingual population speaking English occasionally as a foreign language (L4). Testing a hypothesis formulated within the Savings Model of Attri-



tion Theory, the author examines the relearning of high-frequency words acquired by participants in the experiment during their studies in secondary schools, and their learning of new low-frequency words compiled for the experiment from dictionaries. The participants performed much better at recall tasks (relearning) than at learning new words. The chapter closes with some caveats about the limitations of the experimental design, but nevertheless sketches some implications of the process of language attrition for foreign language teaching and learning, proposing some measures that may help reduce the risk of language attrition among foreign language learners.

In the most interesting chapter of the whole volume, Sadia Belkhir studies the utility of the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Steen 2002; 2007; Steen et al. 2010) on a small group of nine university students with a varying degree of proficiency in EFL, divided into two groups of unequal size according to how familiar they were with metaphors and the cognitive linguistic approach to conceptual metaphors. All the participants took part in the initial testing during which they were required to identify metaphors in academic texts. The participants with no or little knowledge were then trained, in a manner of speaking, in the identification procedure devised by Steen and his collaborators (although the materials reproduced in the appendix are actually based more on the classical Lakovian theory, cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1980). This second group showed a marked improvement concerning their ability to identify metaphors in texts after this period of instruction. However, their overall performance was not very good, even the highest scoring participant identified only slightly over 40% of all metaphors in the texts used in the tests. The author concludes that explicit discussion of the topic of figurative language may have some beneficial effects, but there remain many other factors to be investigated in order to get a more complete picture.

Chapter 5 by Georgios P. Georgiou is concerned with uncovering the perceptual patterns of Arabic adult speakers with regard to the vowels of L2 Cypriot Greek. The author employs the theoretical framework of the perceptual assimilation model by Best (1994) in order to investigate the set of vowels used by native speakers of Egyptian Arabic who live in Cyprus and have adequate knowledge of Cypriot Greek. The subjects were found to have assimilated several Greek vowels into their Arabic phonological categories, while discriminating a couple of problematic L2 vowels, e.g. /i/ - /e/ and /o/ - /u/, to a moderate degree. The author considers these findings as indicative of an attempt by Arabic speakers to assimilate Greek vowels into their inventory of Arabic vowels.

Amel Benaïssa's quasi-experimental study reported in Chapter 6 attempts to test

the facilitative role of digital flashcards and the online Quizlet programme in the process of acquisition and retention of new lexical items. The study restricts itself to three aspects of vocabulary acquisition: passive vocabulary, active control vocabulary, and active free vocabulary of EFL students at the university level. Pre- and post-learning tests were administered to both the experimental and the control group. The former had access to the online Quizlet programme during the training stage between the two tests, while the latter used traditional paper-based fill in the blanks and multiple choice questions. The results of the experiments indicate that the technological innovations tested do not necessarily deliver everything that that is hoped from them. The study indicates that Quizlets and digital flashcards may be of great help in developing students' vocabulary knowledge, but also that their active use of vocabulary remains at a less than satisfactory level. The author attributes this in part to the lack of subsequent activities that would stimulate the use of newly acquired vocabulary in different contexts.

The chapter by Nora Achili centres on EFL learners' perceptions of success and failure. It is studied using the attribution theory (Weiner 1985; 1986), a framework based on the concept of causal attribution that was introduced in FLT in order to explain the influence of learners' past experiences (success and/or failure) in learning on their future language learning and performance. Specifically, this approach aims to facilitate the understanding of what leads to both success and failure, with the ultimate goal of stimulating improvement in the areas affected by failures. The author collected her data at the University of Boumerdes, Algeria, where 62 English language graduates were given a causal attribution questionnaire designed so as to tease out their perceptions of internal and external causes associated with academic success and failure. The results presented a much clearer picture in the case of the perceptions of success than in the case of failure. The highest rated causal attributions associated with success were intrinsic: they included for example one's interest, regular class attendance, commitment, revision and preparation. On the other hand, the results were more ambiguous as far as academic failure was concerned. The respondents mentioned both internal and external factors, such as lack of personal motivation, or inadequate teaching, respectively. Achili points out that if we aim at maximizing the chances of success and reducing failure, reasons that uncontrollable and unstable internal reasons should be preserved and enhanced, while external, unstable and uncontrollable reasons, on the other hand, should be compensated by adequate teaching strategies.

Although most chapters in the volume are not ordered in a way that would reflect a conceptual link between them, the chapter that follows, authored by Katia Berbar, logically follows with the topic of anxiety experienced by foreign learners,



which can be seen as a more or less direct consequence of previous series of failures as inhibiting and demotivating events. The study is an attempt at determining the degree of anxiety whose effects can be observed at three stages of learning: input, processing, and output. The author uses a Likert questionnaire designed to gauge the levels of anxiety experienced by students at these three stages of foreign language learning. It turned that anxiety levels were generally quite high throughout the three stages. Specifically, anxiety negatively affected students' understanding of vocabulary items in the target language at the input stage, anxiety arousal had negative effect at the processing stage, while it constrained their ability to communicate freely at the output stage. On the basis of these findings Berbar pleads for foreign language teachers to do whatever may be necessary in order to offset the negative effects of anxiety on students' learning.

The volume closes with Chapter 9, by Hanane Ait Hamouda, who examines students' perceptions of the use of code switching in EFL classes, especially whether they see switching as a barrier in communicating in English. In a way, this is logically connected to the previous chapter, as code-switching can be seen as a phenomenon that would help remove the feeling of anxiety in a language learning situation. This empirical study using an online questionnaire is guided by two pairs of alternative hypotheses predicting EFL university students' positive or negative orientation towards the use of code-switching in class and whether or not they consider it to form a barrier in the process of communicating in English. Unsurprisingly, the results showed that code-switching was widely present and practiced in EFL classrooms by both instructors and students. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the replies by students imply that they saw code-switching as a "communicative tip" (pp. 146–147) and that did not feel that code-switching interferes with their production in English. The role of code-switching may be positive in certain situations, and at certain levels, but one would expect that it is not necessarily beneficial in the long run.

In conclusion, we can say that this volume provides a very useful resource for scholars interested in the interaction between cognition and foreign language learning. It is obvious that one of the merits of this edited volume is that by covering an exceptionally broad range of phenomena, from metacognitive awareness and vocabulary attrition to anxiety in language learning and code-switching, it delivers fresh data and perspectives on the interplay of cognition and foreign language learning. Although the contributions are limited in the ways that have been outlined above, it is also at the same time praiseworthy that we can have a glimpse into how current trends in linguistics and teaching methodology find application in a compact, localized environment. The volume is, however, at the same time, broadening our

horizons, as we can learn about developments from an area, in this case the region of Northern Africa, specifically, the Algerian higher education system, which appears not to be very often in the focus of attention in Europe or globally.

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