The EFL Mental Lexicon: Connectivity and the Acquisition of Lexical Knowledge Depth

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Abstract : The study at hand has attempted to describe the acquisition of three EFL lexical knowledge aspects - meaning, synonymy and collocation – across three academic levels: Baccalaureate, second year and fourth year university levels in Morocco. The research also compares the development of the three lexical knowledge aspects between knowledge (reception) and use (production) and attempts to trace their order of acquisition. This has led to the use of three main data collection tasks: translation, acceptability judgment and multiple choices. The study has revealed the following findings. First, L1 and EFL mental lexicons are connected at the lexical knowledge depth. Second, such connection is active whether in language reception or use. Third, the connectivity between L1 and EFL mental lexicons tends to relatively decrease as the academic level of the learners increases. Finally, the research has revealed a significant 'order' of acquisition between the three lexical aspects, though not a very strong one.