SUMMARY

"In truth the future does not belong to English speakers. Indeed those who are fluent in English in addition to their own (or any other) language will be at a great advantage, enjoying a marked premium in the marketplace" (Musa 2002:129).

The present project opens with the above quote from M. Bakri Musa. And if he and many authors on the topic of bilingualism are to be believed, then anyone not fortunate enough to be exposed to the right factors at the right time and in the right way, will simply have to accept the fact that the future just does not belong to them. Or should they?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the correlation between the extent to which variable external factors to which tertiary-educated individuals with different preferred learning styles were exposed, may seem to be of more or less influence on their bilingualisation.

The research comprises five parts, the first of which establishes an overview of the complexities involved in defining the term 'bilingualism'. Indeed, the phenomenon of bilingualism is complex, and is the main focus of many scientific disciplines, namely linguistics, psychology, sociology and pedagogy. Each of these areas investigates selected aspects of bilingualism and constructs its own definitions of the concept. In the first chapter, key concepts and distinctions are discussed, along with the historical background of bilingualism, before delving into the typologies of bilingualism, which in itself is a much-debated subject in the field of bilingual education.

Chapter two presents the selected external factors influencing the process of bilingualism as well as the correlations between bilingualism and factors sorted into respective categories (cognitive, psychological, physical and socio-cultural). This chapter thereby begins to highlight the challenge to the theory that while earlier bilingualism had been regarded as having a negative impact on cognitive development, resulting in reduced performance in various cognitive tasks, since the publication of the results of the research by Peal and Lambert (1962), it was proven that when external factors were considered, bilingual participants can often in fact outperform monolinguals on measures of verbal and nonverbal intelligence. So, after a review of some such cognitive benefits, this chapter goes on to shed light on some of the studies addressing executive control and metacognitive awareness, as well as the question of

increased metalinguistic awareness in bilinguals, and the importance of external factors that seem to confound studies looking into bilingualism.

Chapter three then takes a magnifying glass to the setting in which this research took place: *Education First*, as well as its role in the world of language education. This institution is among the largest academic networks in the world, making it a fitting venue for an investigation into bilingualism. To give credence to the calibre of EF's staff and students (who constituted the entire pool of participants for this study), this establishment is examined from its earliest days, all the way to its current academic offerings, with a particular focus on EF London where the qualitative interviews were conducted. To this effect, chapter three therefore examines the history of Education First, the programmes it offers, a cross-section of its students, as well as an insight into the exponential growth of English language courses at Education First.

Following on from this, Chapter four presents the research design, providing a more detailed overview of the procedure, the pool of participants and the instrumentation used to conduct the quantitative and qualitative analyses, which were specifically formulated to investigate a spectrum of external factors including those forming the primary basis for the wide social and academic context from which the existing hypotheses presented in previous chapters were drawn. The ultimate aim, as stated, being to determine how these factors may relate to or even result in an individual's success in achieving bilingualism. All questions posed to participants were therefore formulated with a view to best gather data about each of their language histories, language use, language proficiency and language attitudes, as guided by the body of contextual work presented in preceding chapters. Put simply, the two main areas of investigation could be stated as follows:

1. The correlation between variable External Factors and the Bilingualism of the sample population.
2. The correlation between Learning styles and the Bilingualism of the sample population.

For the investigation of these two areas, the sample population consisted entirely of tertiary-educated bilinguals sourced from within EF London (some of whom were only just embarking in tertiary education at the time of research, while others had graduated from tertiary education some time before it). The criteria for selection was a CEFR score of C1 or C2 and/or an IELTS score of 8 or above, so that they may be widely recognised as fluent bilinguals (though not necessarily natural bilinguals). Based on this

criterion, the available population during the research phases consisted of 64 females and 36 males, all of whom were between 17 and 45 years of age. Every participant voluntarily took part in the study over the period between September 2014 and June 2016.

The study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach in that it consisted of qualitative interviews which were used to provide further or alternative explanations to results revealed in the quantitative stage of the research[35].

Following an investigation into the qualitative phase of the research to give validation to the quantitative phase, the final chapter presents an analysis of the results from the latter phase and discusses how these results indicate to what extent different external factors tend to contribute to success in achieving bilingualism.

The quantitative stage consisted of an online survey which was filled by participants in their own time and space, to ensure that they would not be influenced in any way by the researcher. The subsequent qualitative stage consisted of face-to-face interviews with a randomly selected 10 participants out of the 100 from the quantitative stage. These interviews covered a 40-question questionnaire which included the quantitative stage's questions for verification (minus the Learning Style Questionnaire questions (Honey and Mumford 1986a)), as well as a further set of questions designed to complement the investigation, and provide more detailed background information about the subjects.

The results from the quantitative stage indicated that out of 100 tertiary-educated French-English bilinguals, 16 showed a preference for Honey and Mumford's *Activist* Learning Style (with a further 8 showing a preference for the Activist Learning Style + at least one other learning style); 17 showed a preference for Honey and Mumford's *Pragmatist* Learning Style (with a further 16 showing a preference for the *Pragmatist* Learning Style + at least one other learning style); 26 showed a preference for Honey and Mumford's *Reflector* Learning Style (with a further 19 showing a preference for the *Reflector* Learning Style + at least one other learning style); and 13 showed a preference for Honey and Mumford's *Theorist* Learning Style (with a further 20 showing a preference for the *Theorist* Learning Style + at least one other learning style).

The difference in average age of first initiation to the language each Learning Style group learnt second proved to be too small to lead to any significant conclusions, but

[35] For more on the mixed method approach, see Creswell (2014:224).

the average number of years of total immersion in their second language did reveal interesting figures with the smallest Learning Style group (Theorists) showing the lowest average number of years (3), and the largest Learning Style group (Reflectors) showing the highest (6.5). This order remained statistically correct even after a recalculation of the averages discounting any participants whose figures fell beyond the scope of standard deviation.

Another noteworthy result, proving Honey and Mumford's *Learning Styles* descriptors to be accurate in that the characteristically most studious groups showed the highest number of years of study, revealed that the *average* number of years of study per Learning Style, was not reflective of an increased likelihood to be bilingual. Indeed, *Theorists* showed the highest average number of years of study in their second language, but as per previously shown findings, they only form the third largest group. The largest group, *Reflectors*, had the second highest average number of years of study, while the smallest group of bilinguals, *Activists*, had the lowest average number of years of study in their second language.

These findings can be interpreted to mean that while insufficient study of one's second language will lead to poor chances of becoming bilingual, a greater number of years of study in one's second language will not yield the same results as increasing the amount of time spent in total immersion of one's second language. This too fits logically with the point of view of Honey and Mumford's Learning Styles, which suggests that immersive experiences will appeal to every style of learning whether one has a preference for physical experience like the Activists, analysis like the Theorists, practice like the Pragmatists or observation like the Reflectors.

To conclude, it is hoped that research into bilingualism and the contexts within which it can be best nurtured will continue, so that the world of SLA may continue to further its understanding of what can improve one's chances in achieving successful bilingualism, as well as what approach to external factors that may yield better results for the individual.

The research ends by addressing its opening quote by Bakri Musa, who may still be right about multilingualism being the key to the future, but according to the findings of this research, that key is within any learner's grasp, as long as they are willing to put in just a little introspection and seek out the right amount of exposure.

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