Introduction

In this chapter, I will first define Language Awareness (LA) and provide a brief history of it as a movement in a social context. The next section looks at the theoretical foundations of LA, including cognitive and sociocultural aspects of LA and how individual learners/language users construct their LA. I then address issues of research and teaching; LA is discussed from a complexity perspective before the focus shifts to an LA approach in the language classroom. There are links and references to how LA has been implemented and some examples of common tasks and techniques. Throughout the chapter, I will show that despite their very wide range and diverse manifestations, LA approaches have common theoretical and ideological foundations in first language classrooms (e.g. James and Garrett, 2013) and in second and foreign language classrooms (e.g. Wallace (2013) on critical LA; Eslami-Rasekh (2005) on pragmatic LA; Svalberg (2005) and Zangoei et al. (2014) on consciousness raising).

What is ‘Language Awareness’?

Although Language Awareness is usually seen simply as a state of knowledge, it is also an ideological stance towards language and language related matters, and an approach to language teaching. As shown by the definition provided by the Association for Language Awareness (ALA; http://www.languageawareness.org/web.ala/web/about/tout.php), it covers a very wide and disparate field:

[LA is] explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use.

A key word in the definition is about. LA is knowledge about language, not the ability to use it (proficiency). LA covers not only language structure and vocabulary but also, for example, how language works socially and culturally, people’s perceptions of and beliefs about language, and how languages are taught and learnt.

The meaning of ‘sensitivity’ in the definition is not entirely clear, but it seems a useful term to cover the kind of LA which is partly conscious and partly intuitive: for example, a poet’s understanding of the effects of linguistic choices on readers or a language-aware speaker’s understanding of what is appropriate language in a given context.
LA thus has a cognitive component (explicit knowledge, conscious perception and sensitivity), and an equally important socio-cultural element (learning, teaching and use). The latter is more evident in van Lier’s (1995: xi) much quoted definition:

Language awareness can be defined as an understanding of the human faculty of language and its role in thinking, learning and social life. It includes awareness of power and control through language, and the intricate relationships between language and culture.

Fairclough (2013, first published 1992) considers LA essential, but with the proviso that “a critical orientation is called for by the social circumstances we are living in” (p. 6). Critical Language Awareness (CLA), building on and incorporating critical discourse analysis, thus focuses on the relationship between language and power. A number of researchers, for example contributors to Fairclough (2013), have researched the implementation of CLA in language teaching (see also Janks, 1999; Wallace, 1999).

Hudson (2010) and Mulder (2010) distinguish between LA and knowledge about language (KAL). Both authors use the latter term, KAL, to refer to the explicit study, teaching and learning of language structure and LA to encompass all other aspects of language, such as the social, cultural and power dimensions referred to above in van Lier’s definition. More frequently, however, LA and KAL have been used as synonyms (e.g. Carter, 1990; van Lier and Corson, 1997), and this practice will be adopted in this chapter.

‘The Language Awareness movement’: ideological foundations and social context

In the 1970s, demographic and social changes in the UK and resulting social tensions added to concerns about low literacy and lack of interest in modern foreign languages (MFL) among UK school children, providing the impetus for ‘the LA movement’. There had been a wave of West Indian immigration to the UK in the post-war period, and, in 1972, Asian East Africans were expelled from Uganda, with many settling in the UK. An example is the city of Leicester in central England, where a large number of ethnically Indian migrants arrived within a short time span of ten years: Gujarati is now the city’s second language, spoken by over 11 per cent of the city’s population (UK Census, 2011). As well as its positive effects (such as shaping the UK into the multicultural and multilingual society it is now), for a couple of decades, migration also led to increased racism in some parts of the population and a strong anti-racist reaction in others. In this climate, Eric Hawkins, the founder of the Language Awareness movement, suggested that LA could help foster tolerance and inclusiveness.

These social concerns added to the main impetus for the LA movement, the low English language literacy levels and low uptake of MFLs in UK schools already noted. Hudson (2010) describes it as a teacher-led grassroots movement. Hawkins first proposed LA as a school subject which would bridge the gap between mother tongue English and MFL study in the 1970s (Hawkins 1974, 1999; James, 2005). It would include both learning to investigate language and learning to learn. As a bridging subject, it would create a ‘language apprenticeship’, requiring MFL and English teachers in schools to collaborate. However, by 1999, Hawkins felt that despite a healthy debate about LA issues, progress on LA in UK schools had been patchy.

Nevertheless, the LA movement has undeniably had an impact. In the UK, work by linguists such as Michael Halliday (from the 1960s), David Crystal, Ron Carter, Dick Hudson and others has brought about a change in thinking, and LA ideas have now become part of the UK school
Language awareness

The UK experience is not entirely unique. Mulder (2010) describes how grammar teaching in Australian schools, when it was re-introduced, having been absent from the syllabus for years, was hampered by gaps in the teachers' subject knowledge. In response to this situation, linguists and teachers collaborated to create a new ‘English Language’ subject for the last two years of secondary school. Mulder (2010) provides examples of the types of LA tasks used in the course. They involve the explicit study of language, focusing on grammar in context and using real-world texts.

The need for LA in schools has increased rather than diminished due to social developments, and not only in the UK. In Europe, multilingual and multicultural school populations have become the norm rather than the exception. Breidbach et al. (2011: 11), referring to a European Union context, consider that LA as a bridging subject has the potential to link “home and school languages, inside and outside the classroom experiences and the inner personal self with the social context in which the learner lives”. LA here clearly encompasses a much wider sphere than just language structure. In addition to what they call the linguistic–systematic dimension, they distinguish cultural-political and social-educational dimensions of LA (p. 13). Breidbach et al. (2011) emphasise the critical and reflective nature of LA and the fact that when it promotes the noticing of differences between languages and varieties, it does so descriptively, without value judgement.

The Association for Language Awareness (ALA) was founded in 1994 to support and promote LA in research and practice “across the whole breadth of Language Awareness”. Although it originated in the UK, the organisation now has an international membership, runs a biennial international conference and edits a peer-reviewed research journal (Language Awareness). In Francophone and German-speaking Europe, the EDiLiC association (Education et Diversité Linguistique et Culturelle) has a similar mission but focuses more specifically on teaching in schools. It also organises biennial international conferences. As is evident in the EDiLiC name, it shares the LA ideology of tolerance and inclusiveness.

Language Awareness and second/foreign language learning: theoretical foundations and social attitudes

In the 1970s and 1980s, the LA proposition that conscious linguistic knowledge would facilitate language learning contrasted both with earlier behaviourist views and with Stephen Krashen’s very influential theories (Krashen, 1985), which posited that second/foreign languages (L2s) were acquired in a manner very similar to children’s learning of the mother tongue (L1), primarily through exposure to new language. Early communicative language teaching (CLT; see Thornbury, this volume), which relied on unconscious acquisition through meaningful input...
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and practice and excluded explicit instruction of form, seemed validated by Krashen’s theories, which helped make explicit teaching/learning about language unfashionable in the UK and the US and countries most influenced by them. In this context, an LA approach, such as that proposed by Eric Hawkins at this time, was downright ‘heretical’ (James, 2005).

In its early, exclusively meaning-focused version, CLT did not live up to its promise. Observing this, EFL teachers in particular started reintroducing the explicit teaching of form alongside more communicative, meaning-focused elements. In this, they were supported by Long’s (Long, 1991; Long and Robinson, 1998) ‘focus on form’ construct, which referred to the teaching of specific grammar features as and when student difficulties first became evident in a communicative context. Focus on form contrasted with a traditional approach to grammar teaching, where grammar was pre-sequenced in the language syllabus, and which Long called focus on forms. An indication of how far grammar teaching had fallen out of favour is the title of Doughty’s (1991) paper, which started by stating what may now seem obvious: “Second language instruction does make a difference.” It showed that learners produced more accurate relative clauses if they had been explicitly taught about them than if they had simply been exposed to them as input.

Whatever the fashion in ELT, LA proponents in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s continued their efforts to influence teaching and learning. Sporadically, the UK government supported their efforts, most notably by funding the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project, led by Ron Carter (1989–1992), which produced language teaching materials for schools and organised related teacher training (Carter, 1990, 1994; see chapter references for LINC sample material). The project incorporated principles of critical LA and critical discourse analysis. Historical, social and dialectal variation was discussed. The descriptive, inclusive approach to language was, however, seen as subversive and a poor model for school children and so, having spent over £20 million on the project, the UK government stopped the already completed materials from being printed.

Governments and social attitudes, however, change. A recent sign of progress was a project which produced materials, now freely available, on English speaking and listening skills for 14-to 19-year-olds (Shortis et al., 2011, All Talk, funded by British Telecom; see chapter references for link). Its interactive, awareness-raising tasks deal with English as used in the UK, often examining non-standard language, and give young people the opportunity to reflect on their own language, including identity issues and the effect of linguistic choices. It signals a substantial shift in social attitudes to language in which the LA movement has played an important part.

Below I will discuss some cognitive and sociocultural factors which support the argument for conscious learning about language, especially in foreign language learning.

**Cognitive factors in developing LA**

Although the relationship between instruction and learning is complex, research has shown that, for other than very young children, the explicit study of and conscious reflection on language facilitate learning (see extensive reviews in Ellis, 1994; Spada, 1997; see also Collins and Marsden, this volume). The case for LA has been particularly bolstered by research findings regarding the role of ‘noticing’ and attention in language learning. Based initially on observations during his own learning of Portuguese, Schmidt (1990, 1995) suggested that noticing was a necessary first step in the learning process. A large body of research has since helped us understand the role of noticing and attention in more depth. It generally confirms that noticing facilitates learning, but also that it may not be sufficient. In an effort to unravel why, Schmidt (1995) differentiates between levels of awareness, for example whether something has merely been noticed or noticed and understood (see also Truscott, 1998). Izumi (2002) takes this further, arguing that the effect
of noticing on learning depends on how the noticed information is processed. In-depth processing might include learners making links to prior knowledge, making sense of what they have noticed and retaining it in long-term memory. Some of the research on noticing is concerned with teachers’ corrective feedback (Mackey, 2006; see also Mackey, Park and Tagarelli, this volume), or more generally with if and when learners ‘notice the gap’ (Swain, 1995) between their own output and an output model provided, for example, by the textbook or a more proficient speaker.

A challenge for teaching and learning is that any kind of noticing requires attention, which is a limited resource. Hence, learners will only notice some, but not all, of the information about the language potentially available in the input, and not necessarily what the teacher wishes them to notice. What they notice is partly idiosyncratic and partly due to natural inclinations. For example, we all normally attend to meaning before form (Van Patten, 1990), so learners may not notice the word order or the form of verbs in a text.

To promote and direct learners’ noticing, teachers and researchers sometimes use a technique called visual input enhancement, or textual enhancement of input (TE). In written text, TE consists of formatting, size or colour to make specific linguistic features more salient, for example underlining words indicating future time in a text or using highlighter on expressions of degree, thereby drawing the learners’ attention to them. Research suggests that TE increases the likelihood of learners’ noticing the enhanced features (what the teacher wants them to notice), but studies are difficult to compare because of variation in, for example, the type of TE applied and the features targeted (Han et al., 2008).

Furthermore, LA is naturally enhanced by bi/multilingualism. Knowing another/other languages affords a range of general cognitive advantages (Adesope et al., 2010) such as heightened noticing ability, improved problem-solving skills and increased creativity (Furlong, 2009). Jessner (1999, 2008) and Herdina and Jessner (2000) argue that third (and subsequent) language acquisition is different from L2 acquisition due to the LA the multilingual learner has already developed.

**Engagement with language (EWL)**

The predominant view of learning among LA proponents is sociocultural (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf and Becket, 2009; see Negueruela-Azarola and García, this volume) and constructivist (Kaufman, 2004); that is to say, learning is said to emerge from a process of interaction in which the learner is actively involved. Knowledge about the language is not primarily transmitted either from the teacher, peers or materials, but is constructed by the learner. The environment in which this takes place can be teacher–student interaction or pair/group work in a classroom, or it might be social interaction outside the classroom. Individual learners/language users may also notice features of the language and reflect on them on their own, but it is assumed that interaction for the purpose of learning (inside or outside the classroom) at some point will facilitate this conscious construction of knowledge.

Svalberg (2009) has called the process through which LA is created *engagement with language* (EWL). As Figure 28.1 shows, during EWL, the learner draws on the LA they already have (prior knowledge) to create new or enhanced LA, which they can then draw on in further EWL, and so on.

EWL is different from learning processes in other subjects, for example, maths or history, in a number of ways. One is that language is both the object and the medium of learning, i.e. we teach and learn language through language. Another important difference is the essentially social nature of language, which means that EWL can take place as much outside the classroom as inside it. Language-aware individuals might, for example, notice and reflect on features of
language in the newspaper they read or in the interaction with traders in the fruit and vegetable market. Whether the language used is their first, second or a foreign language, such EWL is likely to enhance their LA. The social aspects of language also mean that identity and cultural issues are likely to play an important part in the learning process. EWL thus has cognitive, affective and social characteristics which interact mutually and with external factors. Ideally, the engaged individual is focused on the language task, willing and interactive. The LA practitioner strives to create a learning environment which facilitates high quality EWL.

Chik (2011) suggests that LA is developmental. In a narrative enquiry of the LA of 8- to 18-year-old English language learners in Hong Kong over 2.5 years, interviews revealed that the students developed awareness of English as an academic subject first, followed by English as a language system, followed by English use in context. She concluded that their awareness of themselves as language learners in a particular socio-cultural and education context was, and needed to be, the first stage in their English language development.

The affective dimension of EWL can have a decisive influence on its quality, and hence on the knowledge that emerges from it. Bolitho et al. (2003: 256) suggest that affect, our emotions, can stimulate “a fuller use of the resources of the brain. Positive attitudes, self-esteem, and emotive involvement help to fire neural paths between many areas of the brain and to achieve the multidimensional representation needed for deep processing of language”. This applies at any age but plays an especially important role with very young learners (Kearney and Ahn, 2014), whose cognitive EWL may not be very deep for developmental reasons.

**Language Awareness and complexity**

Both language itself and the language learning process are complex dynamic phenomena (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman, 2010), and many LA researchers adopt a complexity approach to research (Jessner, 1999, 2008; Herdina and Jessner, 2000; van Lier, 2004; see also Mercer, this volume, for further discussion of complexity and language teaching). EWL is complex and dynamic, and learning emerges from it through the interaction of multiple internal factors (cognitive, affective and social) and external influences.

Feryok (2010) argues for the use of a complex systems theory framework in teacher cognition research. Considering student teachers’ EWL as complex and dynamic helped Svalberg (2015a) and Svalberg and Askham (2014) understand how learning emerged from collaborative grammar awareness group-work. It showed individuals enacting engagement in very different

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*Figure 28.1  The Engagement with Language – Language Awareness cycle
but potentially equally effective ways. The case study in Svalberg and Askham (2014), drawing
on diary, interview and interaction data, shows how a particular learner, ‘Emily’, despite usually
saying very little, is deeply engaged and benefitting from listening to more talkative peers. She
learns not only when they are right but also from their errors and doubts. At the same time,
her occasional contributions are valuable to the group’s knowledge construction. Her approach
contrasts with that of ‘Isabelle’, who, being aware of often being wrong, still prefers to develop
knowledge by verbalising her understanding and receiving peer feedback. In the group of five to
six students (depending on the session), Emily and Isabelle complement each other, contributing
positively to each other’s learning and to the EWL of the whole group.

The implications for research of taking a complex systems perspective are discussed with great
clarity by Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008). One is a greater emphasis on understanding
the dynamic learning process than on measuring learning at specific points (although the latter
may complement the former); absence of a measurable learning gain does not necessarily mean
that no learning has taken place. Zheng (2014: 369), for example, describes the development of
learners’ awareness of L1–L2 semantic differences as “slow, unpredictable, and characterized by
phases of incremental growth, stabilization, and attrition”. Svalberg (2015b) observes student
teachers developing an understanding of different aspects of the term ‘phrase’ (e.g. noun phrase,
adjective phrase) and has paraphrased the stages of understanding as: “‘phrase’ is a label attached
to some strings of words”, “one phrase can be inside another phrase” (i.e. the idea of embedding),
“each phrase has a head” and “a phrase can consist of just one word”. Although all are correct
and necessary insights for the acquisition of the construct, none on its own would necessarily
result in measurable success in identifying phrases in a text. The gradual process we call learning
involves assembling and connecting a number of such insights over a period of time.

Complexity-oriented research tends to take a holistic approach, drawing on, for example,
case studies, ethnographic research and certain types of action research. There is thus great scope
for language teachers to carry out LA research in their own classrooms (Svalberg, 2012). The
challenge for the researcher and the teacher-researcher is to decide how to delimit the complex
system they are investigating to a manageable set of factors.

**Teachers’ Language Awareness**

As explained above, LA is about much more than grammar, but grammar is what studies on
teachers’ LA tend to focus on. They tend to find that LA about grammar is less than expected or
less than most researchers consider necessary for teaching (e.g. in Hong Kong, Andrews, 1999;
in the UK, Alderson et al., 1997, and Alderson and Horák, 2010), but in Brazil, for example, the
opposite has also been found (Bailer et al., 2014). Teachers who themselves have not been taught
grammar explicitly may develop their LA by teaching, for example, from pedagogic grammars –
though knowledge acquired in this way is not necessarily accurate (Berry, 2014), and some teach-
ers instead use strategies to avoid teaching grammar or answering students’ grammar questions
(Borg, 2001, 2005; Sanchez and Borg, 2014). Hence, it is important that student teachers develop
explicit grammar awareness during language teacher education (LTE; see Johnson, this volume).

Well-developed LA has the potential to make teachers autonomous (Kumaravadivelu, 2012),
i.e. not dependent on textbooks but able to adopt, adapt, supplement or replace material accord-
ing to their learners’ needs. Andrews (2003) points out that in addition to proficiency and
knowledge about the language, teachers need pedagogical content knowledge, that is, knowing
how to apply their LA in the classroom. Language teachers need to be able to explain and answer
student questions; evaluate the appropriateness of text books and materials for their own students
and teaching context; and design their own tasks when necessary.
On many LTE programmes, grammar is taught separately from pedagogy. Wright (2002) is critical of this practice, emphasising the need to make the connection between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice explicit. Wright emphasises that LA development in LTE requires working with data, for example corpus data, classroom talk samples and learner language, which the student teachers respond to affectively and analyse linguistically. He emphasises the need for time to talk about the material and suggests that a development session about a specific grammatical feature be immediately followed by a task where the student teachers write materials and/or plan a lesson to teach the feature to a specific group of learners.

Student teachers are likely to model their own teaching on teaching they have experienced themselves, including sessions experienced during LTE programmes. Hence, using an LA approach with student teachers may not only be effective in achieving the immediate curriculum goals (e.g. enhanced grammar awareness) but can also provide the students with a model they can reflect on and draw on in their own practice if and when it is appropriate. Next, I will discuss what characterises an LA approach in the classroom.

A Language Awareness approach to language learning and language teacher education (LTE)

LA approaches to language learning and teaching are used all over the world for a range of purposes, and hence adapted to local contexts. They are related by their adherence to the LA principles discussed earlier and expanded on here.

In the USA, for example, some states provide school children with experiences of languages other than English which are not taught as subjects in themselves but for the bridging, ‘language apprenticeship’ purpose envisioned by Hawkins and discussed earlier. The languages may be ones present in the local community or spoken by an available member of staff. Parents who speak other L1s may be asked to contribute to sessions where they share their own language and their culture with the students. This is called world language learning (WLL; see chapter references). The emphasis is very much on language and culture, and fostering positive attitudes in the children to languages other than English and to the communities that speak them. Kearney and Ahn (2014) describe the engagement with language (EWL) of preschool children in a WLL class. The children are not meant to fully master the Korean and Spanish to which they are exposed in this class, but they are excited to try to understand and perhaps use the new and different sounds and script. Their eagerness to engage makes it likely that some learning will emerge, whether in the form of memorised language or changes in beliefs and attitudes.

In Europe, and sometimes elsewhere, the term awakening to languages (AtL) is widely used to refer to similar LA practices for bridging purposes in schools, often with young learners. Lourenço and Andrade (2014) describe AtL classes in a pre-primary school in Portugal, where the students are exposed to a range of languages. Activities include listening to songs, comparing words in different languages, writing in a different script and so on. The study focused on one particular aspect of the lessons and found that an AtL group of students increased their phonological awareness, while a control group did not. Examples and accounts of AtL practice in a number of countries can be found on the EDiLiC website (see chapter references).

Borg (1994), Wright and Bolitho (1993) and Wright (2002) outline some common characteristics of an LA approach in some detail (see also Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Although they refer to language teacher education, the same principles apply to LA in second/foreign language teaching and also to LA to teach L1 or world languages (see earlier). The different contexts and purposes of learning in these settings clearly have an important bearing on how LA is implemented, but the principles remain the same.
LA practitioners do not try to transmit knowledge to their learners. Instead, they involve the learners both cognitively and affectively in exploration and investigation of language (i.e. EWL). Samples of language in use are treated as data, which the learners analyse, for example, to discover a rule, correct and explain errors, or to interpret and discuss a writer’s reasons for choosing a particular word, phrase or grammatical form over another. In Kearney and Ahn’s (2014) study with young learners, the affective aspect of EWL arguably played a relatively greater role than it might with adults, who are able to draw on more developed cognitive resources, but the principle of active engagement applies equally to both.

An LA approach to language teaching/learning thus involves the learners in the analysis and discussion of language (also called ‘languaging’, Swain et al., 2002; or ‘grammaring’, Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Some of the discussion may be with the teacher, but typically there is a great deal of peer interaction. The learners’ active involvement and hence their interest in the task is crucial, as the aim is high quality EWL. LA tasks do not on their own develop learners’ communicative competence. In a language course (in contrast to a language teacher education programme), they may be combined with communicative practice tasks to give the students opportunity to apply their enhanced LA in meaningful practice. LA thus does not replace but complements more communicative, meaning-focused activity.

An LA approach to language teaching will often involve so called consciousness raising (CR) tasks. CR is synonymous with ‘awareness raising’, but CR is the more frequent term. Such tasks can refer to any aspect of the language or language learning and teaching, for example attitudes to language varieties, pragmatic conventions, phonological features, genre characteristics, learning styles – the list is potentially endless. Tomlinson (1994) provides examples of pragmatic awareness tasks, and Svalberg (2005) shows a set of grammar awareness tasks, both intended for EFL contexts. In relation to L1 teaching, Alim (2005) discusses the use of critical LA (Fairclough, 2013) in US schools as a means of helping children understand sociolinguistic issues that affect them, often negatively, and empowering them in the process. The previously noted ‘All Talk’ material for UK schools (Shortis et al., 2011) is similar in that it raises the students’ awareness of varieties of English in their social context and issues surrounding their use.

In the teaching of grammar, CR tasks contrast with practice activities. As pointed out by Ellis (2002) with respect to EFL, the two differ primarily in their purpose and in what they require learners to do. A practice activity helps learners move knowledge from short-term memory to long-term memory, usually by repeated production opportunities. The purpose of a CR task is instead to help learners develop explicit understanding of the target feature. It will involve noticing, but it may or may not involve production. Typically, the learners will be asked to identify a specific feature in a text and to discuss or draw some conclusions from what they have noticed. Ellis (2002: 173) concludes that a CR approach “accords with progressive views of education as a process of discovery through problem-solving tasks”.

Some textbooks include so called ‘discovery’ tasks. The teacher needs to evaluate them critically. Are they sufficiently challenging to make learners engage with the language in some depth? Are they likely to seem relevant and interesting to the learners? A good CR/discovery task should result in cognitive, affective and social EWL. To make the task more meaningful and less mechanical, it needs to generate ‘cognitive conflict’ (Svalberg, 2015a, 2015b; Tocalli-Beller and Swain, 2005); the level of challenge should stimulate peer negotiation and require the students to justify their solutions.

Teachers using an LA approach tend to focus on how language is actually used, what speakers’ and writers’ choices mean, and what alternatives were available to them. A frequently used technique in LA is TE (textual enhancement; see above). The TE may be done by the teacher of textbook writer, but it can also be learner-produced (Svalberg, 2012: 383), as when learners are
asked to underline or highlight particular features in text. They may then be asked to draw some conclusion about the language on the basis of their observations. Another popular awareness raising task type is dictogloss, of which there are many variations and which can be used at any level (see for example Shak, 2006, for its use in a primary school).

Learners can also carry out corpus-based enquiries in class, for example on language varieties, collocations or word grammar (Sinclair, 2004). Corpus data provide examples of authentic use of both written and spoken language of different kinds. Links are provided at the end of this chapter to the freely available British National Corpus Sampler (2,000,000 words of spoken and written English) and the related ‘simple search’ facility provided by the British Library. Corpus data may take the form of simple lists of examples or sets of ‘concordance lines’ with a certain number of words to the left and right of the target feature. Gabrielatos (2005) and Frankenberg-Garcia (this volume) provide examples of the use of corpus data and point out some of the pitfalls. One limitation is that teachers may require some training in how to use corpora and, depending on the task, so might students. In L2 teaching, the fact that each line represents a different context, which is not even a complete sentence, can make text less meaningful and potentially harder to process. But, especially at higher levels of proficiency and in teacher education, corpus-based tasks can be a useful awareness raising tool (Farr, 2008).

The recognition that explicit reflection and discussion about language is facilitative has also renewed interest in using the learners’ L1 knowledge as a resource in developing LA. Comparisons of L1 and L2 can be carried out on all aspects of the language, for example sentence structure, or how politeness is expressed. In a bilingual context, White and Horst (2012) found that raising Canadian school children’s awareness of cognates in English and French was successful and useful to the learners. In foreign language classes where students and teachers share an L1, it allows them to draw on prior knowledge and has the potential to foster noticing of features in both languages (see Kerr, this volume, for further discussion of own-language use in ELT).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of LA as a state of knowledge, as a language-related ideology and as an approach to language learning and teaching. The sociocultural and political context from which it emerged, and in which it still exists, is one of population movements and consequent increases in multilingualism and multiculturalism (e.g. 700 Syrian refugees per week arriving in Sweden in 2014). LA has an important role to play in this context. Learning each others’ languages takes time and is often not practicable, but learning about them and what they express (e.g. culture, identity) can happen more quickly and could reduce a sense of ‘otherness’.

The LA inquiry approach is also a way of teaching regular language classes, whether modern foreign languages, English as a foreign or second language, or learners’ L1. By training learners and teachers in noticing and analytical skills, it encourages learner autonomy and criticality. Asking the simple question ‘What is it language users/language learners need to become aware of?’ forces us to formulate not only how language works as a system but also how it works socially and for whom. The ideological dimension of LA then becomes as important as its teaching approaches and techniques.

**Discussion questions**

- What is your perspective on the place of grammar terminology (metalanguage) in language teaching and learning? What are the implications in your classroom?
- To what extent do you think learners in your particular context might (or might not)
benefit from an LA approach in a specific area (e.g., language attitudes, language and power, language and culture, academic writing, grammar, pronunciation etc.)?

- How well do you understand your learners’ EWL (engagement with language)? Obtain your students’ permission to record them solving a consciousness-raising task. Listen to/view it repeatedly (or transcribe it) and note down how cognitively, affectively and socially engaged they are and how they go about being engaged. Try to understand what might have helped or hindered each student’s EWL, and how the task – or the surrounding setting – might be improved.

Related topics

Bilingual education in a multilingual world; Cognitive perspectives on classroom language learning; Communicative language teaching in theory and practice; Complexity and language teaching; Corpora in the classroom; English for speakers of other languages; Errors, corrective feedback and repair; Language teacher education; Method, methods and methodology; Sociocultural theory and the language classroom.

Further reading

Language Awareness is the official journal of the Association for Language Awareness. It publishes papers across the whole range of LA fields and concern and can be found at: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmla20#.VcsGe3FVhHw

Berry, R. (2012) English grammar: A resource book for students. London: Routledge. (This resource is likely to enhance the grammar awareness of both teachers and students by drawing attention to the atypical as well as the typical. Examples and tasks, often using authentic language, are interesting puzzles, and the explanations are very clear.)


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