SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.688| ISI I.F. Value: 1.241| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2016 ISSN: 2455-7838(Online)
EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)
Volume: 10 | Issue: 6 | June 2025 - Peer Reviewed Journal

APPLYING LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN EFL CLASSESS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role and implementation of language awareness in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Language awareness is defined as the conscious understanding of language structures, use, and learning processes. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of scholars such as Wright, Bolitho, and Borg, the paper highlights how language awareness serves as both a methodological approach and a professional competency in language teacher education. The study investigates the self-reported teaching practices of EFL instructors in higher education institutions in Karakalpakstan through a questionnaire focusing on tasks, materials, teacher and student roles, and assessment methods. Findings reveal that teachers actively promote language awareness through student-centered teaching, awareness-raising activities, and reflective practices. The article concludes that enhancing teachers' language awareness - through professional development, improved communication skills, and innovative teaching methods - can significantly contribute to more effective and meaningful language learning experiences.

KEY WORDS: *Language Awareness, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Teacher Education, Communicative Competence, Student-Centered Learning, Language Teaching Methodology, Linguistic Sensitivity, Language Pedagogy, Reflection.*

INTRODUCTION

For many decades, the role of language in education has been a significant focus of research and has been explored from numerous angles. Scholars across the globe have shown consistent interest in understanding how language functions within educational contexts. Various methods have been developed to examine this, including studies on overall language development, as well as the acquisition of foreign and second languages.

An area that has gained growing attention in recent years is language awareness. According to the curriculum, a teacher who is language aware not only serves as a language role model but also teaches the language specific to their subject area. Today's emphasis on more innovative, demanding, and future-focused language education highlights the need for a more comprehensive, holistic approach to teaching and learning languages. This approach should consider linguistic, sociocultural, and individual dimensions, and should emphasize real-world language situations where listening, speaking, reading, and writing are integrated.

Language awareness - defined as the explicit understanding of language, along with a conscious sensitivity to language learning, teaching, and use - aligns well with this broader perspective. It supports language learning by fostering reflection on language itself and encourages the development of higher-order thinking and creative skills.

The National Council on Language in Education (NCLE) Working Party on Language Awareness defines language awareness as an individual's sensitivity to and conscious understanding of the nature of language and its significance in human life. They identify three main areas where learners' awareness and sensitivity to language can develop: the cognitive aspect (such as recognizing language patterns), the affective aspect (like cultivating positive attitudes toward foreign languages and their speakers), and the social aspect (such as improving learners' ability to function effectively in social roles like citizens or consumers).

Language Awareness, as an approach, has been developed further by researchers like Wright, Bolitho, and Borg, particularly within the context of language teacher education. Wright and Bolitho describe Language Awareness as a methodological tool to investigate language and its use, especially in relation to classroom practices. Their framework for Language Awareness activities, aimed at English language teachers and trainers, is rooted in the concept of Knowledge About Language (KAL) - a foundational, yet often overlooked, aspect of the teaching profession. Through engaging with language, reflecting on new insights and prior knowledge, and viewing language from various perspectives, Language Awareness work helps teachers become more attuned to linguistic features.

LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

Wright and Bolitho advocate a top-down approach: first introducing teachers to Language Awareness activities through direct experience, then helping them derive the principles behind those activities, and ultimately preparing them with the skills and

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knowledge needed to implement Language Awareness strategies in their own classrooms. They believe that only teachers who are themselves linguistically aware can truly foster meaningful language learning [8:292-304].

Building on the perspectives of Wright and Bolitho, Borg delves deeper into the principles behind Language Awareness as a methodology in foreign language teaching. While traditional views see Language Awareness primarily as a concept, Borg focuses on its practical application, especially in teacher training. He emphasizes the importance of actively exploring language, describing language learning as an ongoing investigation of a constantly evolving system. He argues that this kind of exploration helps learners develop a more explicit understanding of language and become more aware of their own learning processes [2:61-73].

Borg highlights the power of discovery-based tasks - those that engage learners both emotionally and intellectually - as tools to boost both language awareness and learner motivation. His model of Language Awareness methodology is characterized by several key features:

Understanding language as something dynamic, to be continuously explored;
Using discussion and reflection about language as a core part of learning;
Encouraging learner-centered exploration and discovery as the most effective way to build awareness;
Engaging learners on both an affective (emotional) and cognitive (intellectual) level to support meaningful learning;
Helping learners develop both a solid knowledge about language (KAL) and the skills for ongoing, independent learning.

In his later work, Borg also emphasizes the value of collaboration between language educators and linguists, reinforcing the idea that Language Awareness should be seen as a pedagogical tool. He defines it as a set of classroom-oriented processes designed to promote understanding and exploration of language. His framework brings together linguistic, educational, and psychological principles, underlining Language Awareness as not just a concept but an essential teaching methodology that supports effective language instruction [3: 118-124].

Borg outlines several key characteristics that define Language Awareness (LA) as a teaching methodology, emphasizing its role in fostering deep, reflective, and autonomous engagement with language learning. According to him, effective Language Awareness methodology involves:
Challenging learners' preconceptions about language, helping them to perceive it in more meaningful and informed ways;
Supporting accurate and creative language use for personal expression and social communication, by integrating both cognitive and humanistic perspectives of language and learning, and by making the process intellectually engaging and motivating;

Making language learning interactive, encouraging students to investigate linguistic phenomena and share their observations with others;

Promoting critical reflection, where learners analyze real language data, develop hypotheses about language use and structure, and then test and refine those ideas through ongoing inquiry;

Embracing a multi-dimensional approach to language analysis, covering all core linguistic areas - such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics - allowing students to examine language from varied perspectives;

Encouraging personal connection and ownership, engaging learners in language exploration in a way that makes the learning experience personally meaningful;

Supporting the development of autonomous learning skills, equipping learners with strategies and access to resources that help them continue studying language independently.

In reviewing the role of Language Awareness in teacher education, Borg stresses that for teachers to effectively implement this methodology, they must first develop a strong linguistic awareness themselves. This includes a thorough understanding of the language they teach, as well as the ability to translate this understanding into effective classroom practice. In other words, teachers must not only *know* about language, but also be skilled in *communicating and applying* that knowledge in ways that are accessible and engaging for learners.

RESULTS

As teachers play a significant role in the actual implementation and success of a new approach, it is important to investigate their practices with regard to such an approach. The success of curriculum reforms often depends on the compatibility with the existing educational context and the amount of support teachers receive to implement such an approach. Furthermore, teachers' understanding of the new approach constitutes a key aspect to successful change. In this study, we will therefore explore teachers' self-reported teaching practices to investigate whether, and if so, how and to what extent, language awareness is present in the current EFL classroom in Karakalpakstan.

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The survey that we have included is questionnaire which help to identify teaching process especially the task varieties, used materials, assessment, teacher's and student's role. From the given responses we have known that teachers pay great attention to the learners' language awareness by designing awareness raising activities, using appropriate methods and techniques, focusing on student-centered classes, motivating with positive feedback and evaluation.

Teachers should be able to see and understand what is happening with the language in their classrooms. Teacher's personal understanding of language is one of the keys for successful teaching and has an effect on everything that occurs in the classroom. It is important that teachers become aware of how they use language to communicate in classrooms, how language affects learning and what the pupils need in terms of language learning and use.

A language aware teacher is able to 'filter' in 'real time' and react spontaneously and constructively to the language content issues arising in the classroom. The careful preparation of the lesson is not always enough to help the teacher meet the challenges that may occur during the lessons and spontaneous actions are needed as well. Teachers need to have awareness and knowledge of the language in general and consider their own beliefs about language and to be able to intentionally use this as part of their pedagogical practice.

In the part of data Analysis we pointed out the analysis of all selected data basically the results of research methods we have used during the investigation. This study was conducted in the context of higher education in Karakalpakstan. The questionnaire taken from teachers involves five items that are based on:

Table 1 Teachers' Response

Type of the task	Material	Student role	Teacher role	Assessment
-mainly according to the text books and topics; -try to focus on integrating all skills; -communicative tasks; - project works; - Games, role-plays, interviews, - Matching, filling in the gaps, multiple choice,	-Textbooks, slides, pictures and internet materials; -Visual aids and textbooks; -Authentic materials; -Printed materials, handouts; -presentation, videos,	-Maintain discipline; -Complete the task; -Follow the deadline; - do peer correction, -give feedback; -being attentive during the lesson; -work in group;	-facilitate the class; -instruct the tasks; -present the topic; -plan the lesson; -give feedback; -evaluate students -manage the class; - provide friendly atmosphere	-according to the course criteria; -task fulfillment during the lesson; -active participation; -cooperation and collaboration - let learners do self-assessment;

From the given responses we have known that teachers pay great attention to the learners' language awareness by designing awareness raising activities, using appropriate methods and techniques, focusing on student-centered classes, motivating with positive feedback and evaluation. The questionnaire consists of five items, which are highly connected with the importance and implementation of language awareness, that precisely describe teacher language awareness in the teaching process and learners' attitude to the language learning. The first item is type of the task which is done during the lesson and its effectiveness for learning and teaching the language. From the justifications it is clear that teachers choose the task type according to the course they are conducting and the objectives of the lesson. Second item on the questionnaire is about the materials that teachers use during the lessons.

The impact of Teacher Language Awareness is present, if the teacher acts as a bridge, connecting the language content of the learners and the materials. The third point is student role in Foreign Language education. As an important aspect, teacher should always analyze the language from the perspective of a learner or learning. Filtering the learner output means that the teacher takes the learners' perspective into account as well. The presented answers justify that teachers prefer the student-centered classes in which lesson is interesting, learners are motivated, language learnt accurately and fluently.

Teachers have demonstrated the role of students in task completion and also the duties of learners as a student especially their competence as a student. The fourth point depicts the teacher's role in task fulfillment and teaching. In the English teaching activities, the teachers are the main body of the teaching, play the role of the guides and is very important role in the teaching. The last point is assessing learners based on teacher's own criteria and learners' participation for the lesson and task fulfillment. It is clear the replies of the teachers on how they assess their learners for their participation to the lesson and what kind of points they focus on.

As a qualified English educator, they should have two language awareness and a good sense of English. Because only when the teachers have the good sense of language, can they create the reasonable teaching atmosphere according to the teaching contents, and can students be exposed to this good atmosphere and use the language awareness to use English and improve their language awareness through practicing. Based on that, we should improve teachers' language awareness from the following three aspects.

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First, English teachers should constantly improve their professional knowledge. In addition to English vocabulary and grammar, teachers should have a certain sense of English culture and language. Teachers can improve the teaching quality of English by constantly improving their professional knowledge.

Second, teachers should constantly improve their English communication skills. In the course of English teaching, teachers should be able to communicate effectively with students in English, and can impart their professional knowledge to students to the maximum extent, which enables students to achieve the maximum comprehensible input so as to achieve the purpose of teaching. In practical teaching, if the teachers' communicative ability is weak, it will directly affect the language awareness of the teachers themselves, which will affect the input quality of the students.

Third, raise the consciousness of improving the teaching methods. In the course of actual teaching, teachers should consciously train students' English consciousness and cultivate their sense of language through subtle influences. In teaching, we should discard the traditional "cramming" teaching method. Learning should be based on students, guiding them how to collect data, how to realize the cultural differences between east and west, to carry out effective interaction between teachers and students, and pay equal attention to applying language knowledge teaching and language teaching. In a word, improving the language awareness of teachers can provide more favorable help and source for English teaching.

DISCUSSION

Teachers should be able to see and understand what is happening with the language in their classrooms. Teacher's personal understanding of language is one of the keys for successful teaching and has an effect on everything that occurs in the classroom. It is important that teachers become aware of how they use language to communicate in classrooms, how language affects learning and what the pupils need in terms of language learning and use.

The implementation of awareness-raising practices seems to fit in with a general trend in education which aims to prepare students with thinking skills necessary for their academic and professional future. Our findings indicate that awareness raising practices offer the opportunity for students to analyze language, formulate thoughts and reason about ideas, and in doing so, a language awareness approach could be a domain specific interpretation of thinking skills development in (foreign) language education. More research into actual student learning as a result of such awareness-raising practices would be necessary to reveal its effect. In addition, this study reveals that curriculum reform in general, and, more specifically, foreign language curriculum, does not imply that such practices are not yet present in current teaching practices. This may help teachers to realize they (unconsciously) engage with such practices already and could focus on those aspects that need further development.

The present study investigated teachers' self-reported teaching practices aimed at stimulating students' language awareness. The purpose of examining teaching practices was not to look for best practices, but to investigate whether such practices are currently present and how teachers, who profess to familiarity with language awareness, integrate such an approach in their teaching practices.

Concerning research on language awareness, it is of great importance that teachers follow the developments in research in order to see what is valuable for pupils' learning. It is the main concern that the concept of language awareness is incorporated into teacher education. Concerning the fact that many teachers find it hard to stimulate the pupils to become conscious learners, would require a precise methodology of language awareness given in both teacher education and as further teacher training.

Language awareness is an area of concern to language educators and that is why, in this paper, an attempt has been made to present an overall picture of what language awareness is, investigating the role of language awareness from a teacher's perspective and why it is important to give more attention to language awareness as a concept in order to enhance language acquisition. Teachers of English need to know how language works, as being able to understand and speak the language they are teaching is not enough. They can gain this kind of knowledge through analysis of samples of the language, and the tasks presented in this paper can be used to promote teachers' and learners' language awareness.

In summary, language awareness has to do with the raising of learners, awareness of features of the target language. The teacher is seen as a guide and a facilitator who helps learners deal with an unknown cognitive area, build their own knowledge of the new language system, then analyze any linguistic phenomena they may have observed and encountered. This way, learners become naturally involved in talking about the language, sharing their beliefs and expressing their conclusions. In other words, through language awareness work, such as discovery oriented tasks, learners' explicit understanding of language and an awareness of their own learning are developed in a motivating way.

The concept of language awareness has attracted much attention since its inception. It has been common belief that students can benefit from language awareness and that by getting insight from language awareness students and specifically foreign language

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learners can critically get involved in four language skills. Such an understanding helps learners be aware of the effect of language on human beings.

CONCLUSION

Furthermore, implementation of language awareness in foreign language courses enriches learners' experiences and knowledge regarding elements of language as well as the related culture. We have achieved to review the theories and works of the linguists who contributed for the enhancement of Language Awareness, defined the role of the method through own investigations, analyzed the selected data and give determination and approaches to the presented points and issues, proved the role of language awareness through taking questionnaire from EFL teachers. The implementation of Language Awareness needs to be wide spread and utilized permanently as we have learnt from the researches and works of the linguists and scholars, analyzed the essence and peculiarities of Language Awareness through questionnaire from teachers' perspective.

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