



Language Awareness in the Classroom

Carl James
and Peter Garrett



Language Awareness in the Classroom

Applied Linguistics and Language Study

General Editor: Professor Christopher N. Candlin,
Macquarie University

For a complete list of titles see pages xv and xvi

Language Awareness in the Classroom

Edited by
Carl James and Peter Garrett

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1992 by Addison Wesley Longman Limited
Third impression 1998

Published 2013 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

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ISBN 13: 978-0-582-06737-0 (pbk)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Language awareness in the classroom. – (Applied linguistics
and language study).

1. Schools. Curriculum subjects: Language skills.

Teaching

I. James, Carl II. Garrett, Peter III. Series

407.1

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Language awareness in the classroom/edited by Carl James and Peter
Garrett.

p. cm. — (Language awareness in the classroom)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-582-06737-5

1. Language and languages—Study and teaching. 2. Language
awareness. I. James, Carl. II. Garrett, Peter, 1950–
III. Series.

P53.L35 1991

418'.007—dc20

90-19557
CIP

Set in 10/12 pt Linotron 202 Ehrhardt

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General Editor's Preface

One of the objectives of the *Applied Linguistics and Language Study Series* is to offer to its audiences reasoned discussions of a state of the art kind to enable networks of interested practitioners to form and ideas to coalesce, especially internationally across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. By its very diversity, the study of Language and its applications needs such taking stock more frequently than many disciplines. We need to formulate where we are and what opportunities exist in our different areas for research and practice.

This latest contribution to the Series edited by Carl James and Peter Garrett is one such formulation, and in an applied linguistics field which has already gathered to itself workers in just the multiplicity of institutions and branches I refer to. A glance at the contributors to this specially collected volume of original papers will show this to be so: teachers from different countries and different levels within diverse educational systems, academic researchers in education, linguistics and psychology, practitioners with interests in curriculum design, evaluation or in learner performance, all are represented here. Readers of this book can look forward, then, to a conspectus. Not, however, to a doctrine; the editors make this very plain. The *British Association of Applied Linguistics* Seminar which gave rise to the book was clearly an occasion of challenges, of issues and of positions, and these debates are well represented in the book. Indeed, the editors' introductory and closing Chapters, while identifying commonalities, does capture very well the unevenness of the terrain.

A preferred definition suggests why this might be so. '*Language awareness is a person's sensitivity to and conscious perception of the nature of language and its role in human life*' clearly needs unpacking. What is meant by *language*? Are we referring to the breadth of communicative competence or the narrower focus on lexico-grammatical and phonological form? Readers will need to know and not just for academic reasons. Current educational debates in the United Kingdom and Australia, as well as in many other countries, show that in the minds of educationalists and in particular of politicians concerned

with education, the definition is crucial and has the most intimate implications for preferred educational practices.

If *language* is difficult to define, then *awareness* is likely to stimulate even greater debate. Is it, for example, to be defined primarily cognitively, in terms of some heightened perception of salience, or social-psychologically in terms of some ensuing attitude or evaluative judgement, or, indeed, sociologically, in terms of connections to be made between language choice and our understanding of the nature and function of social institutions? The 'alternative' growth of a *critical* language awareness movement emphasises how, for some, awareness on its own can never be enough, it has to be awareness *about* and awareness *for*. At first blush, it seems a tall order to connect a Freirean *conscientizacao* with the reported beneficial cognitive effects of bilingualism, yet it may be that the effects of the socially neutral consciousness-raising techniques of some current SLA research might be enhanced if the techniques were informed by such a socially critical dimension. Above all, this need to deconstruct the metaphor is itself inherent in the quotation, speaking as it does about *sensitivity* and *perception* as well as *role*. Nonetheless, as one might say, awareness about awareness is not sufficient either. Like the writers of the papers in this valuable collection we need not only to define terms but to translate them into action. We need to ask not only questions about what but also questions about why, whom and what for.

Translating concepts into action is probably the hardest task of all, and it is one which this volume has at its heart. How can one relate being aware about language to improvements in language performance? Is this indeed a viable and researchable question? How can one relate awareness about language to a greater understanding of the determining role of language in social life? Does being more aware about language translate into ameliorating many of the interpersonal conflicts that have language issues at their root? How can one relate the teaching about language awareness (if, again, *teaching* is what one does) to learning? What is the role of learning strategy to awareness gains? How can one construct curricula which have language awareness at their heart without disturbing the traditional boundaries between academic subjects? Can one have language awareness *across* the curriculum? If so, what are the implications for teacher pre-service and in-service education? If the scope of what language is held to be is constrained in educational contexts often by what it is thought can be formally evaluated, how much more is this so with a notably subjective set of terms like *sensitivity* to, and *heightened awareness* and *appreciation* of language? How one goes about the formative and

summative evaluation of awareness is an inescapable question. As this collection amply makes plain, these issues and more are indeed crucial, raising significant questions of how coherence and progression can be designed for, achieved and measured.

To pose such questions baldly ought not to imply however incapacity for useful action. As the editors show in this collection, there is already in place a substantial body of writing and an established range of organisational networks wherein the debates can take place. It is part of the attraction of the theme that it does offer a forum for this interdisciplinary discussion and critical appraisal. Moreover, it is a forum which has avoided debilitating exclusiveness. Like all good collaborative applied linguistic research, the issues here forge relationships among a variety of types of folk, many of which figure in these pages. So, who gets the benefits? It is part of the purpose of this volume to suggest an answer.

Language Awareness in the Classroom, in the understanding of the editors, is an attempt to represent a 'meeting of minds'. That may sound too definite for some. Perhaps a forum for discussion and action might characterise the state of play better. Whichever readers prefer, it is plain that the five sections with their papers offer a catholicity of view around some central questioning themes, all admirably topical for a problem-based discipline like applied linguistics. Moreover, these are themes which could not have greater immediacy. As I write this Preface, for example, issues of language and its definition and its impact upon the curriculum and on people's social and working lives top the charts in a variety of countries and in relation to a rich variety of audiences: children and the National Curriculum in the UK, migrant workers and award restructuring in Australia, minority peoples and their languages vis a vis majority language users in the USA, to name only a fraction. If a topic like language awareness can encourage the making contingent and relevant of such apparent disparity, then we owe the editors a debt, but not only them, also their contributors and in turn their co-workers and their audiences.

Professor Christopher N Candlin
General Editor

Acknowledgements

The Publishers are grateful to the National Council for Language Education (NCLE) for permission to reproduce copyright material on pages 29–33 from C. Brumfit's chapter in the report on language in teacher education (1988).

We regret we are unable to trace the copyright holder of the extract from *The Happy Mean* from the *Green-O-Pine Guide to Family Health and Fitness* and would appreciate any help that would enable us to do so.

APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE STUDY

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Professor Christopher N. Candlin, Macquarie University

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Section One: Introduction

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1 The scope of Language Awareness

Carl James and Peter Garrett

1 Competing definitions – or complementary perspectives?

Language Awareness (LA) is a term that crops up more and more in a widening range of academic and pedagogical contexts, and this growing frequency of use has brought with it a proliferation of senses of the label. This, in its turn, has led to an increased lack of clarity and consensus regarding its meaning. At times, there is no doubt what the user is referring to; at others it is used somewhat vaguely, perhaps in passing, and one is not really sure what the user has in mind.

A major motivation for the Bangor British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL)/LA Seminar was to assemble representatives of some of the various branches of LA each with its own understanding of the term and invite them to explore common ground and areas of difference in terms of definitions, objectives and means to achieve these objectives. This would be a first step towards delineating the different fields of LA and beginning to find answers to the burning questions: What meanings does LA usually have? Why the variety? What meanings were uppermost in people's minds at the seminar?

A fair starting point for answering these questions is the pioneering work of Hawkins (1981, 1984), which has formed the foundation of what is increasingly referred to as the 'British Language Awareness Movement'. He argued for the implementation of LA by means of programmes of study about language, beginning in primary school and continuing into secondary school to bridge the gap between the mother tongue (MT) and foreign languages (FLs). It was initially and essentially a response to the notoriously dismal achievements in two areas of British education: foreign language learning and school-leavers' illiteracy. For example, according to the survey *Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools* (1977), written by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), two out of every three pupils starting a foreign language in the first year of secondary education opted to drop it as soon as the opportunity arose. And in the case of low achievement in MT

literacy, Gardner (1968) claimed that one in four school-leavers were 'functionally illiterate'.

Hawkins (1984: 4) defines LA in terms of its objectives, thus offering a utilitarian definition. Awareness of language is intended to bridge the transition from primary to secondary education language work; to provide a meeting place and common vocabulary for the different fields of language education (MT English, FL, English as a Second Language, Community Languages); to prepare the way for child-care courses in the fourth and fifth years of secondary education; to facilitate discussion of linguistic diversity (on the assumption that discussion and the greater awareness it engenders are the best weapons against prejudice); to develop listening skills (as a prerequisite for efficient foreign language study), along with confidence in reading and motivation for writing. Activities relying on pair work and often involving data collecting are to feature prominently in such programmes, since in this way pupils will be encouraged to ask questions about language.

The National Council for Language in Education (NCLE) Working Party on Language Awareness agreed on the following simpler albeit pleonastic definition: *'Language Awareness is a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life'* (Donmall, 1985: 7).

The NCLE Report sees LA programmes developing such sensitivity and awareness within the following three broad parameters: a cognitive parameter (e.g. developing awareness of pattern in language), an affective parameter (e.g. forming attitudes) and a social parameter (e.g. improving pupils' effectiveness as citizens or consumers) (*ibid.*). Such programmes are seen as taking a variety of forms, and serving a variety of objectives: making explicit pupils' intuitive knowledge of their MT; strengthening language skills and increasing the effectiveness of communication in the MT or FL; placing in a positive light the linguistic diversity increasingly prevalent in classrooms; fostering better relations between ethnic groups in and beyond school, especially at the workplace; helping pupils to overcome disadvantages incurred by discrepancies between the home and school language; introducing pupils to the concepts and techniques of basic linguistics; imparting an understanding of the value of language as part of human life.

Most of the papers in this volume can be comfortably accommodated within this broad field of LA. Both the definitions we have cited (by Hawkins and by Donmall) allow for considerable flexibility in the papers, some of them focusing more on pupils, programmes and materials (see, for example, Anderson (Paper 10), Donmall (Paper

8), Heap (Paper 18), Little and Singleton (Paper 9), Tinkel (Paper 7) and others focusing more on teachers' views and expectations (Brumfit (Paper 2), Merchant (Paper 4), Mitchell and Hooper (Paper 3)), and teaching methodology (Wright (Paper 5)).

There has also been some extension of the above field to tertiary education – i.e. to students rather than, or as well as, pupils, native as well as non-native speakers. So again we are not referring to the specialist courses offered in linguistics departments but to something more utilitarian. This dimension is explored in this volume by Clark and Ivanič (Paper 13), Hedge and Gosden (Paper 14), Scholfield (Paper 17), Silvester (Paper 16), Wright (Paper 5). It is noteworthy that LA work has been most vigorously implemented in ESP (English for Special Purposes) programmes abroad (Holmes and Ramos (Paper 15), Scott (Paper 20)). Somewhat different perspectives on LA appear in the articles by Chrysochoos (Paper 12) and Toncheva (Paper 11), which look more specifically at FL learners' awareness of themselves in the learning process, suggesting a vital link between learners and their optimal syllabus definable in terms of a self-generated awareness-based needs analysis. Toncheva's paper is 'observational' while Chrysochoos' is experimental. Masny (Paper 21) takes a comparative turn, looking at what second language learners' language judgements are based on at different levels of language development. She shares some common ground with Nicholas, who sees different forms of language awareness as a means of distinguishing between first and second language acquisition and between younger and older child second language acquisition.

Clearly then, the range of the papers in this collection reflects the above-mentioned breadth of definition, and this is undoubtedly attributable in part to the imprecision inherent in the expression 'Language Awareness' itself. To begin with 'awareness', this is bound up with 'knowledge' of various types, and calls to mind immediately the competence/performance dichotomy in, e.g. Chomsky (1968), recycled for 'applied' consumers in terms of learning and acquisition (e.g. Krashen, 1981).

In some cases (e.g. Tinkel (Paper 7), Silvester (Paper 16)), where LA work is conducted with groups sharing a MT, LA focuses on making pupils or students more aware (by which is meant conscious), through exploration, of the intuitions they hold about their MT, on turning their implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge. In this type of self-discovery interpretation, we might see LA as based around and providing a means to bridge the *consciousness gap* within the individual. Insofar as LA and consciousness raising (CR) are terms often used

interchangeably, this is CR in Rutherford's sense of 'raising to consciousness', of guiding the learner's attention to particular aspects of language, thereby increasing the degree of explicitness:

The role of C-R is . . . one in which data that are crucial for the learner's testing of hypotheses, and for his forming generalizations, are made available to him in a somewhat controlled and principled fashion.

(Rutherford, 1987: 18)

For others (e.g. Merchant (Paper 4), where LA work is with groups not sharing a MT, there is more focus on making each pupil aware not only of his or her OWN implicit knowledge but also of each other's (new or old) explicit knowledge. There is a concentration on learning about all the languages present in the LA group, on their differences and what is common to them. This, then, is the LA of multilingual and multicultural classrooms. In this second type of LA, the dominant perspective is that of sharing each other's explicit knowledge about their own languages and the aim now is to bridge a different kind of gap, which methodologists might refer to as a *knowledge gap*, or even an *information gap*, which so often divides the conceptual worlds of pupils within the same class. Such a gap – as we know from Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) methodologies (cf. Prabhu, 1987) – creates a natural context for talking about language. Here CR/LA can be seen in terms of increasing (raising) the amount of conscious knowledge in each individual through new and explicit input, from teachers or, better still, from one's peers, via the perceptive teacher's mediation.

Somewhere between (or is it alongside?) the above types comes the LA aimed more at foreign language learners, where the focus is on both making the learners aware of their MT intuitions, and increasing their explicit knowledge of what happens in the FL. This suggests scope for a new type of Contrastive Analysis (CA), not CA of the classical sort done by linguists and then made over to textbook writers, but CA done by pupils as FL learners themselves, to gain linguistic awareness of the contrasts and similarities holding between the structures of the MT and the FL. This new role for CA seems unfortunately to have gone unnoticed by Rutherford.

A further aspect of the term LA itself which allows for a great deal of breadth is the word 'language' and the fact that it can be used in either a generic sense (i.e. languages in general) or a specific sense (i.e. a particular language). The relative proportions of already-possessed implicit knowledge raised to consciousness on the one hand, and new

explicit knowledge (or input) on the other, will be dependent in part on which of these senses of 'language' is dominant.

In the sort of LA where 'language' is meant generically (say, 'multicultural LA'), each pupil is likely to experience far more new explicit input in comparison to the degree of implicit knowledge raised to consciousness, than a pupil in the specific-language LA, working with the MT, where most work will involve raising intuitions to consciousness. In addition, course content seems likely to vary far more in the former, since it will (ideally) depend greatly on the language backgrounds of the particular pupils. Whether one considers it desirable to call these by different names – e.g. Mother Tongue Awareness; Awareness of Languages; Foreign Language Awareness, Language Awareness, Awareness of Language, Consciousness Raising – for the sake of drawing clear distinctions, is another question. In any event, all of the above would or could involve at the very least thinking about language, and probably also learning to talk about it. At least, both involve coming to terms with language. Whether this talk is to be conducted in a standard 'received' metalanguage, or in a non-technical one, is a further issue to be resolved some day. If 'talking about language' implies linguistics, the question arises whether LA is just another name for linguistics. Perhaps LA is to linguistics what nature study is to biology.

Within what we have referred to as the British Language Awareness Movement, there is considerable emphasis on reflecting on and talking about language, and a clear implication that the teaching of languages involves talking about language in an illuminating way. This requires the establishment of a common, acceptable and adequate metalanguage that is accessible to both teachers and learners (see, for example, Department of Education and Science DES, 1988a). Holmes and Ramos (Paper 15) provide learners with a checklist of reading and summarising strategies, which they make use of in work sessions when they take stock of their awareness of why they 'choose' to work in the way they do. This, then, is a means of gaining and sharing LA, and, equally importantly, it is a source of evidence in learners for this variety of LA. However, it is stimulating to discover that, outside Britain, LA has even been seen in terms of the acquisition of implicit knowledge rather than explicit knowledge, the evidence for which is observed not in metalinguistic performance, but solely in linguistic performance (e.g. Nicholas (Paper 6)). LA in this sense goes beyond the above-quoted definition from the NCLE Report (Donmall, 1985: 7), since there is nothing in that definition that explicitly includes talking about language.

What is clear from the picture we have painted so far of LA is that any attempt at defining LA has to take account of the variety of purposes of LA in the minds of those using the term. It is to these purposes that we now turn.

2 The goals of Language Awareness work

In this section we shall attempt to add some clarity to the question of goals. In doing so, we shall first return to the question of the likely benefits that would accrue from the widespread adoption of LA programmes in schools. We shall begin with the question 'Who is likely to benefit from educational reforms that introduce LA work into schools and colleges?' and then we deal with the question 'How might pupils and students benefit from such a modification in the curriculum?' In other words, what dimensions of the individual (and, by extension, of society) are likely to be affected through such a provision? We feel that until these questions are fully addressed, it is speculative and even futile to consider what forms educational provision might take, in terms of the syllabuses and the associated activities and materials for implementing LA work that are currently available or potentially so.

2.1 *Teacher resources: reaching the teachers*

Any kind of educational reform must be predicated on teacher preparedness. In Britain, the Report of the Bullock Committee, *A Language for Life* (DES, 1975), while being mainly concerned with the improvement of literacy teaching, made explicit recommendations for the provision of systematic education in language for teachers, parents and pupils.

On the provision for teachers we may read:

We believe it is essential that all teachers in training, irrespective of the age range they intend to teach, should complete satisfactorily a substantial course in language and the teaching of reading. (DES, 1975: 336)

We consider that the basic course should occupy at least 100 hours, and preferably 150. (DES, 1975: 338)

The response to these proposals has generally been deplorably non-committal on the part of university education departments. This is through no fault of their own, but it has been the only response possible in the continuing climate of an unrelenting parsimony on the part of central government.

The Kingman Report (DES, 1988a) was yet another political response to disquiet expressed by employers and parents about the apparently falling standards in English among British school-leavers. Once again, concern was expressed about teachers' lack of knowledge about English and the recommendation was echoed from the Bullock Report that 'all teachers of English need some explicit knowledge of the forms and the uses of the English language' (DES, 1988a: 4).

Clearly, if there has to be an information explosion about language, it has to start somewhere, and that must be with the teachers. The best time for developing such knowledge is during the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) year. The objection that this year is already too full to allow extra timetabled work on language has been slightly weakened by the recent extension of the training year by six weeks. Still there is the problem of the absence of teacher trainers in sufficient numbers and places who themselves have the necessary Language Awareness, not to mention the classroom experience of doing LA work with pupils. Some departments of education are now large enough – as a result of recent government policies of expansion of centres of excellence (and closure of smaller units!) and such 'economies of scale' – to justify engaging the services of a single LA expert. However, it seems reasonable to assume that where there is keen competition for scarce resources, LA will not be regarded as a staffing priority. Some departments happen to have the support of service teaching in what has traditionally been called 'Applied Linguistics' provided by one or two members of a linguistics department in the same university. This provision has frequently been desultory. However, we are confident that any applied linguist familiar with the LA literature and the urgency of providing LA training for teachers to be, will want to abandon the desultory attitude on reading the collection of papers in this volume.

Where pre-service provision is impossible, the next best course of action is to make LA available through In-Service Training (INSET) programmes. Some part-time MEd schemes have been doing this on a small scale. One welcome, but typically parsimonious, government reaction to the Kingman Report has been the appointment of 'expert trainers' in consortia of LEAs in English who could (although they have no brief to) liaise with local universities in order to mediate the necessary training to the teachers.

Teachers tend to be highly dependent on textbooks. If one pauses to ask why this should be so, the answer must be that, for many, the textbook is a lifeline to survival in the classroom, and an eminently good textbook can often make teaching a far more pleasurable and

stimulating occupation. The textbook may function as a surrogate for training, in that you may not need to be trained to be able to use it tolerably well, and also in the sense that the textbook can itself be an instrument of training: the author of a textbook shows the teacher how. This is particularly clearly the case where a good teachers' book accompanies the working materials. So it has come about that many teachers owe their familiarity with LA to textbooks that they have used. Nowhere is this more true than in the relatively 'progressive', albeit often somewhat fashion-conscious, field of TEFL, a teaching and publishing area so lucrative that its publishers are willing to risk innovation where mainstream language teaching would fear to tread. The fashion-conscious side of TEFL may well be one (of many) sources of the variation in the use of the term LA. Teachers' interpretations of the term LA will tend to vary according to the textbooks in which they have met the term, and the activities they have used under the LA heading. For example, one TEFL methods manual (Hubbard *et al.*, 1983) includes a convincing section on LA, demonstrating (pp. 163ff) that before they plan a lesson, teachers have to be aware of the forms and functions they are going to teach. In a somewhat different vein, Gairns and Redman (1986) dedicate the entire first chapter of their teachers' book on vocabulary teaching to LA activities, in which they direct teachers' attention to problems met by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners when acquiring vocabulary. Ellis and Sinclair (1989) even go so far as to structure a whole coursebook around language and learner awareness activities. Then there is the 'humanistic' (and commercial) sector of TEFL, represented by Frank and Rinvolucri (1983) and Rinvolucri (1984), who make extensive use of 'awareness activities', in order to 'close the gap between all too mechanical and all too free language practice' (Frank and Rinvolucri, 1983: 8). Such activities typically take the form of personalised, meaning-focused grammar practice.

We do not wish to give the impression, however, that LA in any of its various forms is only for English teachers, either 'mainstream' or TEFL. Those are the two groups that have been addressed so far, English teachers by the Bullock, Kingman and Cox Reports, TEFL by the publishing houses.

Teachers of modern languages also will benefit from LA work. They are in fact summoned to do LA work (in nature if not in name) by the Draft Orders pertaining to modern languages teaching in the new National Curriculum; there it is stated that modern language study should:

- (a) extend the pupil's linguistic knowledge, skills and understanding;
- (b) lay a foundation for learning any subsequent foreign languages;
- (c) widen the pupil's cultural horizons and promote international understanding.

In one respect modern languages teachers are likely already to have more LA than their colleagues teaching mainstream English. This flows from the fact that they themselves have usually learnt (in Krashen's sense of conscious learning through formal instruction) in classrooms and from textbooks the foreign language they now teach. Consequently they have experiences and memories of language learning not shared by their English, native-speaker colleagues. At least this is the case with the older teachers of languages, who studied before the audio-lingual and 'communicative' approaches were introduced: younger teachers, who learnt under the 'communicative' approach, are less likely to have such explicit knowledge of the target language. They will have been harangued on the need to teach communication in the language, rather than teach about it.

Then there are the growing ranks of bilingual support teachers in Britain's multicultural and multilingual school system. Whether Welsh or Punjabi, they are likely, on account of their bilingualism, to have great awareness of the minority language that they teach, its forms and uses. Where they are likely to fall short is in their awareness of the colloquial and non-literary norms of those languages, which they tend to devalue in favour of the prestigious standard languages, with the result that Punjabi gets ignored and Urdu is idealised. Perhaps more importantly, they will tend to have an underdeveloped awareness of the structural and semantic connections and contrasts between the community language and English. These teachers will need to be guided on how best to foster this positive spirit of disinterested curiosity about languages in contact in the same classroom, school or street.

We must be careful, however, never to lose sight of the fact that language is not the privilege or prerogative of the so-called 'language' teachers in a school. The Bullock Report devoted the whole of Chapter 12 to 'language across the curriculum', emphasising that all teachers, of what we traditionally refer to as different school 'subjects' are essentially different ways of using language, and that all teachers ought to be trained in language. Predictably, this sentiment is echoed by the Kingman Report, Chapter 6 of which (entitled 'The education and training of teachers') calls for 'all teachers of all subjects' to be given in-service and probationer instruction about language.

2.2 Reaching all the pupils

Having made it quite clear that LA is for all teachers, it must follow that it is likewise for all pupils. It must become one of the prime goals of the educational process for learners to gain heightened awareness of: (a) the phenomenon 'language', whether human, animal or machine language; (b) their MT (be it English, Welsh or Punjabi), the 'official' language (if this is not the child's native language); and (c) other languages of the school and/or the community. If, as we have claimed, education consists in a large part in learning to use language (and languages), then learners need to be able to observe and take note of how differences in use correlate with differences in selection of forms of language. Pupils need to be able to characterise objectively and analytically their own choices of language forms and functions, the language of those around them, and the potential of language to reflect variety. They need to be able to describe and assess their own speech and writing, as a basis for self-criticism, which in its turn becomes the impetus for personal growth.

It must be stressed that LA is neither the privilege of the very able nor a palliative for the less able: both claims have been made for it, as Donmall (1985: 9) points out, and we wish to disassociate ourselves from them. It is not a soft option for those who cannot learn to speak and write in French – a claim some people, equally wrongly, made against Area Studies. On the contrary, it may act as a bridge to better FL learning, as Hawkins (1984: 4) suggests. We must avoid at all costs the temptation of offering LA as an alternative to language learning, as proposed by Davies (1983) for example, who seems content to trade the traditional and still essential 'instrumental' benefits of FL learning (i.e. gaining proficiency) for the two less substantial benefits of heightened awareness and improved attitude. The Kingman Report strikes the right chord here when it refers (DES, 1988a: 49) to the 'entitlement' of children to be helped to achieve the highest levels of language competence and understanding that is within their capacity to achieve. The question now arises as to the domains of competence and understanding. It is to these that we now return to define and extend. It is our opinion that there are at least five such domains of LA.

3 The domains of Language Awareness

3.1 The affective domain

We have already mentioned how some TEFL materials writers, usually associated with the humanistic approach of Stevick (1976), have been

quick to promote LA activities. Frank and Rinvoluceri offer their own definition of an LA activity: it is an activity 'to make the language activities personal' . . . 'encouraging the learner to contribute new things of personal relevance', which 'adds up to total involvement of the learner's whole person' (Frank and Rinvoluceri 1983: 7–8). These are somewhat grandiose claims – perhaps reflections of the commercialism of TEFL. Nevertheless, they are in essence a definition of LA that sees the affective dimension as being the most central, a stance repeated in Rinvoluceri's claim (1984: 5) that 'Meeting and interiorising the grammar of a foreign language is not simply an intelligent, cognitive act. It is a highly affective one too . . . [] . . . learner feelings towards specific ligaments of the target language.' There seems to be growing evidence that the possession of internal criteria is a potent factor in determining success or failure in language learning. As Sorace (1985) has shown, the feeling that one knows correlates very highly with actual knowing. The idea that grammar has its localised dark corners of terror is not so absurd either: David Crystal's *Rediscover Grammar* (1988) is founded on a very similar premiss: that learning is done with the heart as well as the head, a point stressed by Scott in this volume, where he uses the pregnant phrase 'a feeling for fact'. Nor is that definition far from the one offered in the NCLE Papers on Language Awareness, where the affective aspect of LA is specified in terms of 'forming attitudes, awakening and developing attention, sensitivity, curiosity, interest and aesthetic response' (Donmall, 1985: 7).

3.2 The social domain

In the last fifty years, most countries have experienced the effects of global migrations of peoples, with the result that the monolingual and monocultural state is now the exception rather than the rule. In Britain, the minority ancient Celtic languages have been outnumbered by the languages of immigrants from all continents. We are still trying to come to terms with the problems of ethnic diversity and inter-group relations, which often erupt into inter-ethnic friction. The solution is a long-term one, and must be based on our schools: LA, in the words of the 1985 NCLE Report, can be utilised 'to foster better relations between all ethnic groups by arousing pupils' awareness of the origins and characteristics of their own language and dialect and their place in the wider map of languages and dialects used in the world beyond' (Donmall, 1985: 8).

The Kingman Report has surprisingly little to say about LA work as an instrument for social harmonisation through the understanding of language variety, only that 'Systematic stress laid upon the regularity

of usages is a step on the way to linguistic tolerance' (DES, 1988a: 36). For 'tolerance', we would prefer to see the more positively committed term 'endorsement'. In fact Kingman tends to emphasise the cognitive advantages of multilingual classrooms, overlooking two points: (i) that the advantages of such classrooms are more in the cultural than the cognitive domains and (ii) that the cognitive benefits of 'comparing different usages' (DES, 1988a: 36) are likely to be far greater for those pupils whose MT is English if the comparisons are elicited and formulated in English. In other words there is some danger either of patronising the children of some minority culture or of exploiting them to the advantage of their native language (NL) English mainstream culture peers.

3.3 The 'power' domain

This formulation of LA has been with us for a long time, at least for as long as individuals with discernment have known that language can be used as an instrument of manipulation. Its best-known formulation (which Scott reminds us of in Paper 20) is that of the Brazilian social engineer Paulo Freire (1972), who speaks of *conscientização*. Not unconnected with the idea of a school subject being a way of verbalising reality, *conscientização* involves alerting people to the hidden meanings, tacit assumptions and rhetorical traps laid by those who traditionally have most access to the media for verbal communication. These may be governments, bureaucracies, the Church, commerce, or, worst of all, unscrupulous individuals. It was Bolinger, in his book *Language, the Loaded Weapon* (1980), who argued the need for linguistic vigilance in the face of the snares of linguistic beguilement. One example he cites is the ruthless exploitation of the capacity of language to create pseudo-entities – what he calls 'reification'. Just as children create fairies by the very act of naming them, so governments can talk about 'jobs' as if they were out there (in the south of England) waiting to be 'filled'. Language deceit of the sort that commerce, particularly advertising, resorts to can be seen in the claim that a 'new' soup recently launched is 'full strength – no water need to be added!' LA work in schools can alert pupils to the mendacity of such obfuscation and develop their sensitivity to further such encounters. New impetus for such LA work is currently being provided by the University of Lancaster 'Language and Power' group (Fairclough, 1989, 1990).

3.4 The cognitive domain

If knowledge is power, then the cognitive and 'power' domains of LA must be closely linked. The NCLE definition of LA stresses

the cognitive advantage to be derived from such study: ‘... developing awareness of pattern, contrast, system, units, categories, rules of language in use and the ability to reflect upon them’ (Donmall, 1985: 7). This statement represents a rejection of what we call the ‘behaviour’ view of language work in school – encapsulated in the American label ‘language arts’ – as well as what was known in Australia as the ‘new English’ (Rothery, 1989), which assumes that language is something that one produces adequately well in response to social or emotional needs. The urge to communicate is viewed as sufficient – without recourse to language study – to bring about adequate language performance. In the LA definition, language in general and languages in particular are legitimate objects of study, as legitimate as other aspects of our physical or social environment that are studied in disciplines like history, chemistry, biology, etc. The effect is to reinstate ‘English’ and ‘French’ as subjects on the school curriculum, and, more importantly, to legitimise any talk about these phenomena in school lessons. On the cognitive effects of ‘talk about’, the philosopher Henri Bergson is unambiguous; in his words:

Nothing is clear until we have put it into words, for words are the only means of translating impressions to the intellect. Hence the immense help expression gives to vision, in clarifying it. The growth of the power of language is not merely a technical development, it implies a growth of vision.

The Kingman Report is equally direct in its support for this analytic dimension of LA: ‘If we are to help pupils function intellectually – and we take this to be a prime purpose of education – we must spend time in English classes examining words and how each contributes to the meaning of a sentence’ (DES, 1988a: 8–9), since ‘is is not enough to write “freely” with no thought given to the audience for the writing, or the shape and patterns of the language used’ (DES, 1988a: 11).

Children should then be made aware of the forms of language. But the functions are not to be overlooked either, for LA is not in any sense a return to the arid, decontextualised grammar-grind of pre-war parsing. LA work conforms to the Kingman Report requirement that language study should be based upon a model of language in use. An Australian initiative to teaching English through use has been based on the classroom exploitation of the notion of (non-literary) GENRE: writing classes centred on helping pupils to identify the conventional patterns of organisation that we instinctively conform to when we produce instances of genres such as telling a story, applying for a job, writing a laboratory report or consulting a doctor. A genre is

'... the stages passed through to achieve goals in a given culture' (Rothery, 1989: 228).

But is there any evidence that the study of language (even 'in use') confers any cognitive advantage? We are assured that it can do no harm – but can it do some positive good? There is evidence that children raised in situations where there is talk about language tend to be cognitively advantaged. Hawkins (1984: 14) notes the strong correlation between socio-economic class and children's reading attainment, attributing the poorer children's lower achievement to their

... deprivation of 'adult time': the opportunity for uninterrupted dialogue with an adult who can give the child individual attention at the critical age when the child is learning to match his expanding conceptual universe to the linguistic symbols of the mother tongue.

Should all this sound like a belated recourse to the now defunct 'Deficit Hypothesis' of Bernstein, the reader might just think again: as Mason (1986) has shown, in a very perceptive paper, it is an emphasis on the child's ability to handle the language-analytical demands of academic discourse that distinguishes the methods of public and private schools, and these are essentially class-related distinctions. If lower-class children are disadvantaged though their restricted access to abstract and analytical language at home, it will be in LA work where compensatory 'Headstart' education can be appropriately delivered.

Another source of evidence that LA has beneficial effects upon cognition comes from studies of bilingualism. Cummins (1978), for example, reports on the marked superiority of bilinguals over monolinguals in evaluating contradictions, or semantic incongruities: just the kinds of skills needed, as we have seen, for spotting advertisers' sleight of hand. Ben-Zeev (1977) goes further, suggesting explanations for the observed cognitive assets accompanying bilingualism. She reminds us that the bilingual's main problem is to keep his two languages apart or 'to resolve the interferences between his languages'. Bilinguals do this by recourse to three strategies, each of which is unmistakably 'metacognitive', i.e. it involves language analysis and LA. First, they indulge in language analysis, refining their awareness of how each of their languages 'processes a given paradigm', that is how each language organises its articles, or its relative clauses or its colour words, etc. Second, bilinguals develop 'a mechanism to emphasise the structural differences between languages and thus to keep them apart'. Third, bilinguals are 'more open to correction and guidance', i.e. to feedback cues, than monolinguals: this trait is probably enabled by the

first two. It is significant that the Kingman Report should likewise observe that:

It can only be sensible to make overt comparisons between languages which the pupils know, so that they can be led to see the general principles of language structure and use through a coherent and consistent approach. (DES, 1988a: 48)

Notable here is the ambiguity of the phrase 'languages which the pupils know': does each pupil know both languages (as is the case with bilinguals), or does each pupil know one only? If the latter interpretation is intended, most pupils will be talking about languages they do not know, with the result that the comparisons made might be at best superficial and second-hand.

3.5 The performance domain

This is the most contentious and certainly the most crucial issue in LA philosophy. The issue is whether knowing about language improves one's performance or command of the language; that is, whether analytical knowledge impinges on language behaviour. There is a large and growing body of published opinion on this issue in the FL acquisition (applied linguistics) literature, associated in particular with the work of Stephen Krashen. The LA literature itself is optimistic rather than informative on this question. Thus the National Council for Language in Education (NCLE) (Donmall, 1985: 7) says that:

Heightened awareness may be *expected* to bring pupils to increase the language resources available to them and to foster their mastery of them . . . [our italic].

Tinkel, in the same volume, referring to an early precursor of LA (Doughty *et al.* 1971), is similarly tentative, claiming that 'a basic premise of the volume . . . is that the development of awareness in the pupil will have a positive effect on his competence' (Donmall, 1985: 38).

It is one thing for individuals to be tentative, but one expects a little more conviction from a government report. This is sadly lacking in the Kingman Report, where an appeal is made to belief [our italic]:

And since we *believe* that knowledge about language, made explicit at the moment when the pupil is ready, can underpin and promote mastery as well . . . (DES, 1988a: 4)

and later:

We *believe* that within English as a subject, pupils need to have their attention drawn to what they are doing and why they are doing it because this is helpful to the development of their language ability. (DES, 1988a: 13)

The first statement is inconsistent: if the pupil already has at his disposal implicit knowledge (competence or ability), then the requisite mastery is already there, so there would be no point in making it explicit.

Nor is there any reason why we should expect LA to improve language performance, for, to quote Tinkel again, LA work involves '... exploring the students' already-possessed intuitive language ability' (Tinkel, 1985: 39). This is consonant with standard definitions of LA. Scholars writing well before the LA movement gained momentum defined LA as 'implicit knowledge that has become explicit' (Levelt *et al.*, 1978: 5) and as 'focussing one's attention on something that he knows' (Read, 1978: 70).

Clearly this issue is that which led to the strong demand for definition at the Bangor LA Seminar: while most of the participants understood LA in the sense meant by the British 'movement' (Hawkins, 1984; Donmall, 1985), some (Nicholas (Paper 6), Masny (Paper 21)) preferred the interpretation associated with Krashen and more particularly Rutherford (1987): they talk of consciousness rather than awareness of language. But the boundaries are not clearly drawn: the view was cogently expressed at the seminar that LA needs no justification in terms of improvement in skill, just as biology does not have to prove that it has led to improved crop or stock production. The study of language is patently self-justifying. The Kingman Report, and most writing on LA, seem not to be content to take this philosophical stance: some kind of 'practical' side-product is piously hoped for, even though its delivery cannot be guaranteed. What seems to be spectacularly absent is research. Apart from the notable small-scale exception of LA validation reported here by Heap, we know of no significant provision of research funding to investigate this crucial and obviously worrying question: instead, the Secretary of State for Education in 1988 appointed individuals with certain 'beliefs' about LA to determine educational policy into the next century! Let us now try to summarise what little is known about the effects of awareness on performance.

We pointed out earlier that bilinguals are particularly receptive to feedback cues, that is, they are able to capitalise on correction they

receive: this seems to bring cognitive advantages. Taking a paper by Snow (1976) as our cue, we would like to propose something similar for monolinguals too, something which we call a *deficit view* of LA. Our suggestion is that language learners only make progress in their skills when they notice (or become aware of) the fact that their own utterances do not match those of utterances which serve as their models (Klein, 1986): to put it simply, we learn by becoming aware of what we do not know. Now, to perceive what you do not know involves a comparison of what one does with what other people do and spotting the discrepancy. Others have taken the same stand. Bertoldi *et al.* (1988) insist that LA is raised through the provision of feedback and models: 'This input allows students to compare their own performance in English with that of native speakers and writers of the language' . . . by first 'identifying their own errors' and following this realisation up ' . . . via classroom discussion or small-group work' (Bertoldi *et al.*, 1988: 160). The same position is taken by Tudor (1988), in an essay on the use of translation in FL teaching. For him, translation has the virtue of creating in the learner a 'perceived resource gap' (Tudor, 1988: 364) which in turn leads the learner to adopt 'resource expansion strategies'. Thus, translation is held out as one of the keys to achieving 'enhanced acquisition' without the mediation of learning.

It follows then that definitions of LA that concentrate on the explicit-making of implicit knowledge are only half-truths: once we realise what we do know, we are able to identify what it is that we need to know. By the same token, realising what we do not know helps us to see what we do know. It is in this way that skills improve when we raise implicit knowledge to awareness. As anyone knows, honest and objective self-evaluation is the key to self-improvement. That, for example, is the secret of success in the Suzuki method of teaching the violin: learners are shown how to develop inner criteria to draw upon in self-evaluation.

The concept of 'reading readiness' has had a long and useful history in literacy theory. The deficit view of LA allows us to coin a cognate concept: we might call this learning readiness. It is commonsensical to suppose that people will learn something most eagerly when they experience a need for that particular piece of knowledge or skill. Give someone the experience of needing desperately to buy a postage stamp in a French post office, and he will be ready to learn when the opportunity next presents itself: he has learning readiness. Bravo Magaña (1986) studied his children's acquisition of English as a second language. Leticia, aged 7, could frequently be seen 'labouring