

## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 6: KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LANGUAGE

The study of knowledge about language or language awareness in education has seen important development in the last decades. Even though interest in knowledge about language goes back a long time, the publication of Hawkins' book, *Awareness of Language: An Introduction* (1984) and the Kingman Report in the UK (1988) triggered an intensified focus on reflecting about language and its importance (James, 1999). Nowadays, there is an Association for Language Awareness (<http://www.lexically.net/ala/>) which defines language awareness as 'the explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use.' Other indicators of the intense activity in the field organized by the Association for Language Awareness are the journal 'Language Awareness' which has been published since 1993 and the Language Awareness conference which takes place every 2 years.

There are some terminological problems with the definition of 'knowledge about language' and other related terms such as 'language awareness' or 'metalinguistic awareness.' According to James (1999), there is a strong support to use 'knowledge about language,' 'language awareness' and even 'metalinguistic awareness' interchangeably. In practice, 'knowledge' and 'awareness' are used in the same way by most researchers and at the same time 'knowledge about language' and 'language awareness' are broader in scope than 'metalinguistic awareness.' 'Metalinguistic awareness' usually refers to the more specific conscious knowledge of the formal aspects of language.

The study of knowledge about language or language awareness has focused both on the mother tongue and second and foreign languages and it is clearly interdisciplinary. Some of the work in this area is educational and addresses ways of improving the teaching of languages at school and other educational settings. Another perspective considers the psycholinguistic processes involved in second language acquisition and examines the role of explicit and implicit knowledge, noticing or 'Focus on Form.' Other researchers have looked at the effect of bilingualism and multilingualism on the development of knowledge about language, in particular metalinguistic awareness. Another interesting development is that of 'critical language awareness' which analyses

social practices and language and discusses the role of power and ideology. All these perspectives are discussed in this volume.

The present volume aims at giving a state-of-the-art review of academic work on knowledge about language in education and at showing that language awareness is crucial in education. The reviews included in this volume reflect the breadth of this area and chart its possible development. Most of the reviews examine the more 'classical' areas of language awareness which can be considered as the 'core,' such as language awareness in education, critical language awareness, explicit knowledge and attention in second language acquisition. Other reviews discuss new perspectives related to knowledge about language such as awareness of the linguistic landscape or the role of technology in research on language awareness. The volume is interdisciplinary in perspective and coverage.

The volume includes a special emphasis on multilingualism and language awareness. In addition to a section on bi/multilingualism which discusses the effect of bilingualism, multilingualism and language awareness in multilingual educational contexts, most of the reviews in the volume are on second/foreign language learning and bi/multilingualism. This reflects the situation of many schools nowadays all over the world. In fact, learning a second or additional language is very common in school curricula and the school language is the second or additional language for many children who speak a minority language in the community or are immigrants.

There are 29 reviews altogether, ranging from overviews of theoretical trends and empirical studies about knowledge about language to more specific projects to develop this knowledge. The contributors come from 17 different countries from all over the world and work with different languages. In spite of this diversity, all the reviews discuss in a direct or indirect way the development of knowledge about language in education. They demonstrate that language awareness is certainly necessary for all schoolchildren at all levels.

The first section, '*Knowledge about Language and Theoretical Perspectives*,' includes seven reviews which elaborate different theoretical issues about language awareness and education. The section begins by reviewing the development of the core areas in knowledge about language and critical language awareness and goes on to discuss other related theories and proposals. Van Essen gives a historical overview of language awareness and knowledge about language and goes back to Wilhelm von Humboldt's ideas as a source of inspiration for the study of language awareness. Cots offers a state-of-the-art view of studies on knowledge about language and highlights the two main trends: psycholinguistic and educational. The next two reviews, by Janks and by Furlong and Norton, adopt a critical approach to the study

## INTRODUCTION

iii

of language awareness by exploring power and identity aspects of the relationship between language and society. Kasper examines the way cognition is addressed in social interaction, from the perspective of ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and discursive psychology. Verspoor provides information about cognitive linguistics and explores its applicability to second language acquisition and second language teaching. Rajagopalan closes the section with a summary of different perspectives on the study of emotion, and draws some implications for language education and second language learning.

Section two looks at '*Knowledge about Language and Language Learning.*' This section discusses psycholinguistic aspects of language awareness, in relation to both first and second language acquisition. Kovacevic explores language awareness in first language acquisition both in the situations of acquiring one single language and early bilingual development. The next three papers by N. Ellis, Robinson and R. Ellis focus on some of the psycholinguistic processes of second language acquisition. These reviews discuss crucial research in knowledge about language in second language acquisition and offer insights into concepts such as explicit and implicit knowledge, noticing, attention and Focus on Form. The next four reviews by Piske, Nation, Sharwood Smith and Alcón and Safont also explore the relationship between language awareness and second language acquisition, focusing on phonetic, lexical, morphological, syntactic and pragmatic awareness. These four reviews give a picture of the role of the specific knowledge about language in the different linguistic levels when acquiring a second language. In the final review of this section, Ranta discusses metalinguistic knowledge in oral production in a second language and elaborates on concepts such as structured input and output practice and corrective feedback.

The third section, '*Knowledge about Language, the Curriculum, the Classroom and the Teacher,*' includes seven reviews which highlight the importance of language awareness in education. Some of the reviews provide specific examples of projects and methodological approaches to foster knowledge about language while others discuss aspects related to the curriculum or the teacher. This section provides a pedagogical focus and can be very useful not only for researchers but also for practitioners. Candelier discusses two European projects to develop an awakening to languages. The idea is to carry out activities with languages not included in the school curriculum so as to develop positive attitudes and knowledge required for individual development in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Marsh discusses 'Content and Language Integrated Learning,' a European approach which uses the foreign language as the medium of instruction, and demonstrates its benefits to develop language awareness. Little focuses on another angle of language awareness, elaborating on learner autonomy understood as a particular instance

of a general human capacity which can be exploited and developed further as learners acquire communicative and metacognitive proficiency in their target second language. The next two entries by Tsui and Fenner focus on the classroom but discuss different aspects of knowledge about language. Tsui reviews research on the linguistic and non-linguistic elements involved in classroom interaction and she highlights the role of the sociocultural context in shaping classroom discourse. Fenner argues that cultural awareness is not an addition to the study of a foreign language but an integral part of second language learning. She highlights the need to develop cultural awareness and to learn a second language 'through' culture. Andrews looks at teacher language awareness understood as the interface between teachers' knowledge about language and their pedagogical practice. He provides an overview of the development of teacher language awareness and its main challenges. In the final review in this section, Sanz and Lado focus on the role of technology in research in second language acquisition and on the advantages of technology in the design of specific treatments in research studies. The use of new technologies in the study of language awareness provides access to new information regarding instruments and data collection techniques.

The fourth section, *'Knowledge about Language, Bilingualism and Multilingualism,'* includes six articles, which take up various psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and educational approaches to multilingualism and language awareness. Baker discusses metalinguistic awareness as related to bilingualism, code-switching, interpretation and language brokering and remarks that there are still important limitations in the field. The next two reviews approach the relationship between language awareness and bi/multilingualism from a sociolinguistic and social psychological perspective. Ó Riagáin discusses language attitudes as related to minority languages and the research methods used to assess attitudes in bilingual and multilingual contexts. This review shows the complexity of the concept of attitudes and the different roles of minority and majority languages in the solidarity and status dimensions. Gorter and Cenoz focus on the study of the linguistic landscape understood as the study of public and private language signs. They relate linguistic landscape to language awareness and language learning and summarize studies conducted in different multilingual contexts. They also focus on the different research methodologies used in the study of the linguistic landscape and its perception. Jessner goes beyond bilingualism and examines metalinguistic awareness in multilinguals. She highlights the interdisciplinary nature of studies in multilingualism by focusing on contributions coming from linguistics, developmental psychology and educational linguistics. The last two reviews in the volume focus on multilingual classrooms. Helot looks at an applied issue, discussing models of language education that can foster positive attitudes towards multilingualism at primary level.

## INTRODUCTION

v

She considers different ways to promote language awareness in general and also explains the Didenheim project, built on a collaborative approach with parents in an effort to move from monolingual attitudes to a situation in which multilingualism is valued. In the last review in this volume, García focuses on multilingual awareness in teacher education and argues that it should be the core of teacher education programs in today's multilingual schools. She describes the different degrees of multilingual awareness and its central role in education.

All in all, these 29 contributions provide an informative introduction to the complexities and controversies in this developing field of knowledge. The collection as a whole covers a broad spectrum of approaches, from educational to psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic including the study of critical language awareness. The volume adopts an interdisciplinary approach and illuminates the crucial role of language awareness in education.

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