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### **published in**

Language Awareness  
2020

### **DOI (link to publisher)**

[10.1080/09658416.2020.1826638](https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2020.1826638)

### **document version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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### **citation for published version (APA)**

Kaal, A. A., & Dönszelmann, S. (2020). Towards language aware citizenship. *Language Awareness*, 29(3-4), 197-200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2020.1826638>

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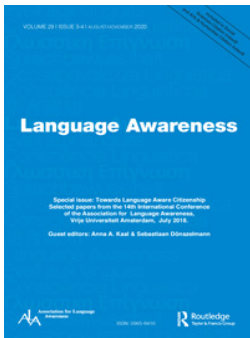
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To cite this article: Anna A. Kaal & Sebastiaan Dönszelman (2020) Towards language aware citizenship, *Language Awareness*, 29:3-4, 197-198, DOI: [10.1080/09658416.2020.1826638](https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2020.1826638)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2020.1826638>



Published online: 12 Jan 2021.



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## Towards language aware citizenship

Even though we are surrounded by language every day, many people go through life without being aware of its essential role. Language is often taken for granted and its possibilities and effects, however interesting, beautiful, or even dangerous, are sometimes overlooked. Every day, we are presented with various narratives and images (by politicians, journalists, social media influencers, our teachers, friends and family) that shape the way we view the world. In multicultural and digital communities, many languages appear side by side, and together form an important part of people's interaction, creativity and identity. At the same time, in many countries, children are being schooled in a language that may not be their home language. These are just some of the many language-related topics affecting our diverse and globalising world. An awareness of such language issues is pivotal in order to understand each other, to enjoy the world's rich diversity, to critically examine the language we use and to take part in society effectively.

In our proposal to host the 14th International Conference of the Association for Language Awareness in Amsterdam, we stressed the ongoing debate in the Netherlands about the future of our primary and secondary school curriculum. In January 2016, as part of a process of curriculum reform, an advisory committee presented its ideas for a newly structured curriculum to our Ministry of Education. One of the suggestions made, in spite of our long-term commitment to foreign languages and cultures, was to abandon the obligatory second foreign language (such as French and German) in a student's curriculum: only English, as the lingua franca, would be taught to every student, leaving other foreign languages as purely optional. This situation fuelled heated discussions amongst politicians, teachers and scholars about the importance of (foreign) language education. It coincided with our own university shutting down its Dutch literature and society programme (after having already cut German and French from its curriculum in previous years) because it attracted too few students, and with universities becoming more and more internationally oriented, using English as the language of instruction in many Bachelor and Master's programmes. English is now also a core subject in primary schools and an increasing number of schools are becoming 'TTO'-schools (bilingual education, mostly English and Dutch) adopting CLIL-methods. At the same time, many schools are hosting a plurilingual student population, without realizing its potential for creating linguistic and cultural awareness.

As foreign language teacher educators, we feel it is our responsibility to discuss such issues with the pre-service teachers and in-service teachers we train. What effects do such curricular decisions have on our students in primary and secondary schools? What should the language curriculum look like? Which knowledge about language and language-related skills should future generations have in order to better understand and shape the world they live in? One of the major assignments of Dutch education (and of teachers worldwide) is to promote active citizenship and social integration. In what way could language education contribute?

Hence, the conference theme of the 2018 ALA conference in Amsterdam (4-7 July): Towards language aware citizenship. In our definition, language aware citizens are people who are able to perceive the effects language has on themselves and on others, and who are able to critically engage with and use language accordingly in today's (multicultural) society: at work, at home, at school, within their communities, et cetera. They are conscious of attitudes and assumptions that may lie hidden within language used to describe the past, the present as well as the future and they understand the value of society's linguistic and cultural diversity. During the conference, we wanted to explore what language awareness scholars feel language aware citizens should know about, how to make them aware, and to what effect.

The conference theme was brought to life by 180 delegates from around 40 different nations, with 2 preconference (young) researchers' workshops, 103 paper presentations, 10 workshops and 4 plenary sessions. In the Eric Hawkins Lecture, Jim Cummins stressed how, in the context of promoting academic success among multilingual immigrant-background students, LA teaching and learning is an *essential* (i.e., non-optional) ingredient in reversing educational inequities. Its effectiveness, however, depends on conceptualizing and implementing it as part of a broader set of interventions designed to respond to social and educational opportunity gaps. Elizabeth Stokoe illustrated her empirically-grounded Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM); it starts from an analysis of users' interactional practices and aims to change people's communicative behaviour, how communication guidance is developed and what people think they know about talk. Angela Creese focused on the function of stereotypes in workplace settings, showing how they may be culturally uncomfortable, but also create moments of conviviality when they are deployed and appropriated as resources to challenge social beliefs, create good humour, and produce newly shared histories. Finally, Gerard Steen presented a model for discourse-driven metaphor awareness: people may notice, and even resist, metaphors they encounter depending on textual and contextual characteristics of texts. This may affect people's critical awareness of metaphor.

From the many fine papers and workshops that were presented at the conference, 9 papers were selected for this special conference issue. Some of these papers underline the development of teacher language awareness as a prerequisite for teaching language awareness. **Antoinette Camilleri Grima** describes a linguistic landscape study carried out with prospective Maltese language teachers. By collecting multilingual house names, interviewing house owners and reflecting on their own language knowledge, attitudes, and skills, the teachers increased their own awareness of the (creative) language they encounter in their community. This proved a good starting point for developing metalinguistic awareness tasks to use in classrooms. Camilleri Grima makes a case for acknowledging and studying linguistic diversity during teacher preparation courses.

In a similar vein, **Ondine Gage** stresses that in order for teachers to be 'arbiters' of language awareness and for schools to be critical sites for learning with and about others, teachers need to develop their own 'praxis' of language awareness. Gage explored pre-service primary school teachers' perceptions of language awareness as they participated in university course work examining issues of equity and social justice. She describes the opportunities for language-awareness raising that lie within the collaborative learning process of such a diverse group.

Other papers in this issue offer insightful analyses that may help define topics and approaches for language awareness classes. **Agneta Svalberg and Jim Askham** focus on teachers of non-credit bearing university language courses in the UK. They argue that such courses are pivotal to address what they describe as ‘a foreign language deficit’ in the UK with a dropping number of students studying a foreign language and the UK leaving the EU. The participating course teachers were assisted in creating communicative and consciousness-raising tasks to actively involve their adult learners in the construction of their own language awareness. The authors show how such an approach can be both viable for teachers as well as valuable to their learners.

**Maryam Saneie Moghadam and Reza Ghafar Samar** offer a quantitative analysis of the use of metaphor in academic discourse and describe which metaphor types and source domains are used in medical papers by native and Iranian non-native speakers of English. They argue that such descriptions may help second language learners, such as students of English for Academic Purposes, to better comprehend, learn and apply metaphors themselves.

**Leif Michael French and Suzie Beaulieu** describe how L2 pedagogy is moving away from accuracy alone towards a broader notion of linguistic and communicative competence including comprehensibility and appropriateness of use; such an approach seems, however, to have failed to make its way to foreign language classrooms. In their proof-of-concept study, the authors successfully introduced sociolinguistic awareness activities to a beginner university-level French class in the southern United States. In order to promote the notion of language diversity, the authors stress the importance of introducing social aspects of language as early as the beginning stages of foreign language acquisition.

Some papers focus on the interplay between linguistic power and linguistic resistance and show us what we can learn from situations where prescribed linguistic and cultural standards tend to marginalize minority groups. **Rika Ito and Megan Bisila** address ‘otherness’ in *nihonjinron*, ‘the theory of Japanese’, which presents Japanese language and culture as a homogeneous and ‘pure’ culture. *Nihonjinron* is said to enforce social and political conformity, which ignores the diversity and complexity of the Japanese people and minorities in Japan. The authors present an analysis of the way foreigners are represented in Japanese anime and discuss how such critical analyses of popular media may contribute to countering stereotypes and raising critical cultural and linguistic awareness in Japanese language pedagogy.

**Ari Sherris** presents us with an ethnographic study of Safaliba, an indigenous Ghanaian language, conducted in Mandari, Ghana’s largest Safaliba town. The Ministry of Education mandates government schools to use Gonja and English instruction material, making it difficult for young Safaliba to learn to read. This has inspired a Safaliba literacy movement in schools. Sherris’ paper provides a snapshot of the Safaliba people and their thoughts and feelings about their language.

**Indira Mawelle** describes the daily practice of code-mixing between Sinhala and English in former British colony Sri Lanka. Such code-switching is popularized by private, commercial FM radio and much used amongst youth groups, while dominant classes in society regard this as degeneration of Sinhala and marginalize those who do not use the prescribed standard language. Mawelle shows us how discussions about local patterns of language use reflect the struggle between linguistic power and resistance.

The final paper, by **Alice Chik and Silvia Melo-Pfeifer** discusses methodology that may help us to further explore the development of language awareness in language learners. The authors argue that, since language learning is a dynamic and individualized process,

we should take more learner-centred perspectives to language awareness and language learning. They present a meta-analysis of LA studies (between 2000 and 2018) that use visual methodologies. Visual methodologies may be particularly suited to examine the development of language awareness among young language learners.

We hope this selection of papers will inspire its readers. We would like to thank everyone (the ALA board, our co-organizers Ellen van den Broek and Anne de la Croix, delegates, presenters, reviewers, student helpers and VU staff) who has contributed to this publication and to the 2018 conference; it has certainly fuelled our passion for language awareness pedagogy and we are very grateful for the many perspectives on language awareness we have received from the world over. Our gratitude also goes to the publisher and Leila Ranta, Joanna White and Xavier Gutierrez for their assistance throughout the editorial process.

This text was written in the midst of the Corona crisis, of which the political and social effects have laid bare even more the need for critical language awareness and the importance of listening to other people's perspectives to understand and determine our position in the world. In the meantime, the Dutch House of Representatives has given the green light to the further development of a new proposal for curricular reform; so far, it still includes other foreign languages besides English and we are happy to say the topic language awareness, with its many different strands, has also made it to the drawing board.

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