DE GRUYTER
OPEN

Understanding language awareness in the first language teaching in Slovenia as a "traditional monocultural" society

Jerca Vogel
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Jerica.Vogel@ff.uni-lj.si

Abstract

In the didactics of the Slovenian language as the first language the term *language awareness* is related primarily to the identity function of standard language as the most important element of the national and cultural awareness, while the conception of language awareness, based on the functional linguistics, has been put forward only in the last decade. Therefore, the main issue is how to understand language and linguistic cultural awareness in a society which is traditionally considered "culturally monolithic", and how they should be dealt with in the first language teaching. In attempt to find the answer, first main features of both the language and linguistic cultural awareness are presented: their levels, components and emphasized language functions. It is evident that a person's linguistic activity and his/her linguistic identification are inseparable. Because of this, the development of language and cultural awareness in the context of two models of first language teaching is discussed later on. In the model aimed at the development of functional communicative competence they are developed optionally and unrelated to each other. Only the model which aims at critical communicative competence allows developing them closely related to each other and to critical thinking.

Keywords

language awareness, cultural awareness, first language teaching, communicative competence, critical thinking

Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, the developed communicative competence has been set up as the fundamental goal in teaching the first language in Slovenia. This goal, however, as said by Grosman (2010, p. 16), "requires well-developed language awareness and the ability to reflect the choice of language forms". Nevertheless, in understanding the concept of language awareness in Slovenia, it is possible to see significant differences between didactics of foreign languages and didactics of Slovenian as the first language.

During recent decades, the central issue of debates related to teaching foreign languages has become language awareness, which is understood, according to established definitions, as a conscious use of language in a variety of speech situations, being therefore mostly related to the communication function of language.[1] Along with that, the development of intercultural awareness, which is the basis for intercultural competence, has been emphasised increasingly. With this aim, culture is defined as the broadest context, in which a person exists, thinks, values, assesses the relevance and reality, feels and has relationships with others.[2] On the one hand, cultural awareness means to understand how a

---

[1] The National Council for Language in Education, for instance, defines it as follows: "Language awareness is a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Garrett & James, 2000, as cited in Byram, 2012, p. 6.); Association for Language Awareness defines it as explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use.

[2] It comprises motifs, values, beliefs, identities, interpretations of important events, which originate from a collective experience of members of a certain collective and have been handed over through generations (e.g. House

person's culture shapes his/her values, attitudes, beliefs and basic assumptions. On the other hand, when interlocutors from different cultures meet, it means also to understand the differences between themselves and people from other countries or from a different cultural or social environment, especially differences in their viewpoints and values. In this context, the role of language is limited to language as a means which we use to present our culture to others and to learn about their culture, or a means which we use to communicate with members of other cultures.

In teaching Slovenian as the first language, however, the understanding of language awareness is characterised mainly by a preoccupation with the identification function of language, which is associated with the nation or culture. It refers to the knowledge of one´s own culture, especially literature, to understanding the role of the Slovenian language as a fundamental component of cultural and national identity, to the meaning of turning points in the language history, the role of language in a modern society, etc., and also to shaping cultural values and a positive attitude towards one's own culture and language. The different conception of language awareness, based on functional linguistics, has been put forward only in the last decade.

Consequently, the most important issue which the didactics of the Slovenian language as the first language is facing at present is: how to understand language awareness in the society which is traditionally considered culturally monolithic, and what sort of relationship should exist between language and cultural awareness?

Language awareness and linguistic cultural awareness

In an attempt to find the answer, we will try to present main features of both language awareness and linguistic cultural awareness:[3] the level of awareness, its components, and emphasized language functions.

Levels of language awareness and linguistic cultural awareness

When defining the level of language awareness, researchers frequently refer to the Schmidt's paper on the four meanings of the concept of *consciousness* (e.g. Ellis, as cited in Al-Hejin, 2004, p. 14; Prtic Soons, 2008, p. 12). In the paper, Schmidt first explains the concept of *consciousness* as an *intention* and *attention*, where, in his opinion, both processes form a basic condition for a person to start a mental processing of the linguistic content. According to Schmidt (cf. Prtic Soons, 2008, p. 13), this processing takes place at two levels. At a lower level, awareness appears in the form of *controlling*: at this level, solving of the language use tasks mostly takes place in an automated manner and without major linguistic efforts; and attention is focused on the communication code only when problems arise. *Consciousness* at a higher level Schmidt (1995, p. 29) calls *awareness*, and sees it as the understanding or recognition of more general rules, principles or patterns, which is not related only to the current control function.

If Schmidt's findings are taken into account, we could consider the two levels also in the context of language awareness. At the first level, awareness is activated when speakers encounter problems in communication, which are associated with language elements or forms. They try to solve such problems with the help of meta-cognition based on their own communication experience, but also with the help of fragments of linguistic knowledge. They base their reflection on a direct (external) context and are oriented towards achieving instant results. At the second, higher level, we speak of permanent, continuous awareness, which is an integral part of a person's communicative competence, and includes reflection of language activity based on a more comprehensive knowledge about language and

---

et all., as cited in Osula & Irvin, 2009, p. 37), but also (frequently unspoken) standards and (mostly unrecorded) rules. Craves (as cited in Saniei, 2012, p. 10) and Brown (as cited in Saniei, 2012, p. 11).

[3] In the article we discuss the linguistic component of broader cultural awareness, which we call the linguistic cultural awareness.

communication. At this level, "traditional" awareness is often enhanced by taking into account a wider social/cultural context, while in achieving the communication objective, a speaker takes into account the principle of social responsibility, in addition to the principle of effectiveness.

Within linguistic cultural awareness, which is understood as a person's conscious identification with a particular cultural or social community in a specific language activity, and as a conscious use of its language version, there are also two general levels.[4] At the first level, a person becomes aware of the language identity or the impact of culture on the language activity especially when problems or misunderstandings arise, whereby the person acts from an egocentric view that values the events, opinions, etc. on the basis of his/her own stereotypical criteria, and does not feel the need to consider a wider context (cf. Quappe & Cantatore 2005, p. 2). At the second, critical level, however, awareness is not related only to the perception of cultural features when meeting members of other cultures, but the person is aware of cultural identity in all (his/her own) language activities. He/she is motivated to analyse the relationship between language and culture at various levels, and has the ability of empathy developed, which allows one a view from different perspectives. Such awareness is based on critically adopted knowledge, beliefs, and on directly or indirectly gained experience, through which a person is able to reflect his/her behaviour, emotional experience and acting, and to change it – where necessary.

Components of language awareness and linguistic cultural awareness

Another feature of awareness, which is also important for language didactics, is its complexity. For example, Mikolič (1999/2000, p. 176) says that from a psychological point of view awareness appears as a distinctively multi-faceted phenomenon that has cognitive, emotional-evaluative and activity dimension, which is divided into the motivational and the ethical. Svalberg (2009, p. 242) finds a similar feature in *engagement* for language, as it can be intellectual, emotional, social and political, or it integrates all these aspects.

The cognitive component of language awareness refers to all the elements that answer the question of what we can do with language, how we use it, and what we know about language and its system. And cognitive component of linguistic cultural awareness can be defined as the way we use language as a means of identification, and as knowledge, thoughts, ideas, judgments and estimates of a specific (micro)culture, its linguistic expression, and the identity dimension of language. Therefore, it concerns not only skills and strategies, but also the metaknowledge. At metalinguistic level, a cognitive component is closely related to the understanding of linguistic and social principles, organisation of language elements and variations into the system or to their systemic relationship to other resources (of the same or different type).

The emotional or evaluative aspect means a general feeling of and a general attitude towards language, its use and its symbolic role, and towards a person's own membership in a particular linguistic community, and it may be positive or negative (e.g. affection, loyalty, respect, pride, resistance, rejection, disdain, shame) (Ule, 2000, p. 116). In the context of language awareness, it refers primarily to language as a communication tool, and in the context of critical language awareness, it also refers to language as a holder of social power.[5] The emotional component of a "traditional" linguistic cultural awareness relates primarily to a positive attitude towards one´s own national group and the language as its key attribute, and to the importance of the standard language. In the context of critical cultural linguistic awareness, it is also extended to intra-cultural language versions (registers), and in addition to a fair attitude towards different groups or languages, it also includes the willingness to accept diversity. The shaped relationship is closely associated with a person's experience and knowledge of the language.

---

[4] cf. Bennett (1986, in Osula & Irvin, 2003, p. 38), Barnett (1997, p. 65) and Byram (2012, p. 10–11).

[5] At the same time, a person develops attitude toward certain linguistic elements and their realisations in a speech activity. As for Slovenian speakers, emotional relationship is expressed, for example, also through sensitivity to the proper use of the dual, etc.

The third component is social and activity-related. Ule (2000, p. 117) defines it as the willingness of a person to act in a specific way depending on the object of positions. In terms of language awareness a person is striving to implement, in his/her own language activity, those aspects and features of which he/she has a positive opinion (e.g. assessment on the basis of clear criteria and reasoning of judgments, the use of the highest form of standard language in public monologue communication), and trying to prevent those aspects and features of which one has negative opinion (e.g. expressing unreasoned value judgments; the use of standard language in private informal situations where it is used to create a hierarchical relationship); as for the critical language awareness, a person seeks to implement desired language practices at social/cultural level, in order to change established undesirable practices.

In this context, the activity is essentially determined by both dimensions of the activity component, i.e. motivational and moral (Mikolič, 1999/2000, p. 178). The motivational dimension means that a person is willing to act in terms of language in a certain way, either for his/her current communicative needs or for more permanent tendencies and aspirations, while moral dimension means that one is prepared to act in a responsible and fair way, not only in accordance with one´s current (communicative) needs, but also in accordance with ethical, social, cultural and personal standards (ibid.).

Most of the authors who explore language and cultural awareness agree that adequate linguistic activity is only provided by all the components of language awareness that act interrelated and depend on each other. However, emphases within the concept of "traditional" and critical language and cultural awareness are different.

In the concept of "traditional" language and cultural awareness, the cognitive component is most emphasised, as it is the starting point for a description of an actual act of language use and a socio-linguistic situation on the one hand, and for a reflection on the correctness and appropriateness of selected language elements or variants on the other hand. These items form the basic content of functionally oriented language teaching. On the contrary, in the concept of critical language and cultural awareness, the activity component in its motivational and moral dimension is in the focus. The activity component is closely related to a reflection on socio-cultural context and its linguistic expression; therefore, we have to see also language awareness and linguistic cultural awareness as interrelated components of communicative competence. However, a reflection and language activity in the concept of critical language awareness are, at the same time, mostly focused on the roles that we accept as the members of wider social communities (nations, civilisations); consequently, observation and awareness raising of an emotional dimension of communication often remain focused only on general cultural assumptions, values, viewpoints, prejudices, and not on individual ones.

Functions of language in the concept of language awareness and linguistic cultural awareness

The concept of the so-called traditional language awareness was influenced particularly by functional and pragmatic linguistics. Functional linguistics emphasised the communication function of language and different purposes which can be realised through language during communication. Such a view was reflected also in language teaching, which resulted from the semantic rather than syntactical approach. Discourse became the starting point of teaching, and teaching focused on systematic meeting with patterns of interaction specific to particular set of circumstances (cf. Christie, 1989). Pragmatic linguistics, dealing mainly with an everyday discourse, drew attention to external context, which should influence the speaker's choice of words, forms and style as much as the listener's interpretation. Understanding the role of linguistic elements in specific circumstances is therefore a key content of traditional language awareness.

By contrast, traditional cultural awareness refers primarily to the symbolic or identity function of language.[6] In the Central European region, this item was for a long time associated only with collective identities, especially with national identity, or with language as a fundamental symbol of national community.[7] In this context, its dichotomous relationship with the communication function was pointed out (cf. Bergoč, 2010; Škiljan, 1999). Due to this division, the identification function of language was not included in the concept of traditional language awareness, but developed separately; in teaching Slovenian as the first language it was understood and developed as an essential element of cultural or even national awareness.

A critical analysis of reducing language awareness only to communication function, and cultural awareness only to the identification function of language, however, has shown that such an understanding is too narrow. Changes in the concept of language awareness are closely related to a different understanding of the context and contextual determinants:[8] Traditionally, the context was understood statically and objectively, while psycho-linguistics and cognitive linguistics define it as a mental structure, as we are always placing the world around us and ourselves into various categories that are socially and culturally determined (cf. Bergoč, 2010, p. 15–16). Therefore, in teaching languages, previously predominant cognitive and individual perspectives on language use and learning are upgraded by a more socially-oriented view (Larsen-Freeman, 2003, p. 33), while language awareness includes, in addition to the awareness of the communicative dimension of language, the awareness of its identity dimension.

Attention to critical linguistic cultural awareness has spread under the recognition that a person's identity is complex and cannot be related only to the national-identification function of the most prestigious language version.[9] Although the standard language, due to its symbolic role, retains an important place in the development of linguistic cultural awareness, it is also necessary to take into account the identity dimensions of other language versions (registers). Which one of the person's identities will prevail in a specific situation, and what will be a linguistic image of the speaker's statement, i.e. within which language versions will they select patterns of interaction (mental schemes, scenarios), depends on a number of contextual factors. In teaching, therefore, the identification function of language cannot be considered only a de-contextualised, abstract national category, but it is reasonable to observe it and raise awareness about it through language use in a given set of circumstances.

---

[6] Among the researchers who were specifically engaged in the identity function of language, there were, for example, Edwards, Halliday, Škiljan and Bergoč. It is worth to mention Škiljan (1999, p. 22 and further) who refers to Edwards (1984, as cited in Škiljan, 1999, p. 29–30), while having also reservations to him, because the former explains the whole linguistic activity as functional dichotomous, either in terms of communication or symbolic dimension. He also reproaches him with considering only collective orientation in the understanding of the symbolic function, with a justification that linguistic interactions are individual facts at the same time (Bergoč, 2010, p. 18–19).

[7] Čok (2009, p. 14) believes that language is the most important item among the means that allow the transfer of mental operations, and thus has the greatest impact on the formation of cultural experience. Mikolič (1999/2000, p. 174) refers to Fishman, who "in the first place points out language as a natural and necessary component of physical and cultural collective traditions, which as such is an important indicator of ethnic authenticity".

[8] Kramsch (2003, p. 3–4) thus states: "Context was always at the core of the communicative language learning (e.g. Ellis, 1987), (…) but it was reduced in the 1970s and 1980s to its minimalist social dimensions in one-to-one verbal interactions. The 1990s brought back the importance of context on a much larger cultural scale and, with it, a need to rethink the relation of language and other meaning-making practices in everyday life."

[9] cf. Bergoč, 2010, p. 24–27; and Lemke, 2003, p. 74.

Therefore, identity is understood as a dynamic cognitive category formed and expressed through the relationship between a person, culture and community, in specific speech act.[10] Thus perceived identification function of language is directly related to the communication one and together with the latter it is an inherent component of language awareness, which should be a basis for critical communicative competence.

Relationship between language and culture

If we want to develop critical communication competence as regards the first language teaching, we must be aware that a person's linguistic activity and his/her linguistic identification are inseparable. In order to efficiently link the development of both activities, it is necessary first to consider the relationship between language and culture. We will base our considerations on the three aspects of this relationship, which were identified from the aspect of foreign language didactics by Risager (as cited in Byram, 2012, p. 6): sociological, psychological and linguistic.

The role of the sociological aspect was summarised by Lemke (2003, p. 71), who states that a person in an eco-social community acquires, among other things, also organisational patterns of interaction with others through the use of language. In each speech act we indicate, by choosing a language version and a discursive pattern, which cultural/social role we have assumed, and which position, in our opinion, we hold in the system of social classification.

Traditionally, in teaching the first language, social relationship between language and culture was taken into account only within an abstracted description of social, geographical and interest-related language versions, and typical social contexts, in which they can or have to be used. In doing so, other language versions were put into a hierarchical relationship with standard language, which was understood as the highest, neutral and desirable language version. Consequently, it was the standard language and its speaker that acted also as the starting point for the development of cultural or national identity. However, a person – especially within his/her own language community – usually does not act as a member of the Slovenian nation or as a speaker of homogeneous standard language. Therefore, when teaching the first language, reflection about the role of words and forms, their relevance, effectiveness and, last but not least, their ethics, should also consider the culture-related social role and associated identities, assumptions, values and attitudes, which the speaker has assumed.

The sociological aspect alone, however, cannot explain numerous questions, for example, why a person chooses to violate them despite having the knowledge of conventions. These questions can be answered only when considering the psychological aspect of the relationship between language and culture. As found out by Ule (2005, p. 74), among others, only a mental processing or interpretation of messages allows us to make sense of interactions and communication. Interpretation results from mental representations of messages, which are further processed by our cognitive processes. The most important one among them is the categorisation or classification of messages in our mental system into different categories, which takes place under the principle of contiguity, similarity, proximity, and significantly depends on our previous expectations (Ule, 2005, p. 55).[11]

However, as pointed out by Ule, despite the fact that cognitive processes of message processing take place "within" each person, their dynamics results from wider processes of social organisation of meanings and messages. Namely, each social and historical context frames cognitive processes of people in its own specific way (Ule, 2005, p. 74). Thus, for example, previous expectations that significantly influence the categorisation were formed in specifically given social circumstances; also cognitive schemes and scenarios are culturally defined and, last but not least, stereotypes, prejudices and

---

[10] A person's identity, therefore, is not a stable category but is shaped through a discourse that takes place in specific historical, social and institutional circumstances and in relation to the subject-specific discursive practices (Hall, 1996, p. 4–5, in Bergoč, p. 27).

[11] The method we use to categorise the world affects the fact of how we understand the message, how to respond to it, and how we act in a communication situation (Ule, 2005, p. 54).

attitudes are an expression of culture. Consequently, social or cultural nature can be attributed to the whole cognitive process, not only to the linguistic expression of thoughts.

The third aspect of the relationship between language and culture is the linguistic aspect, which analyses and describes linguistic principles, and observes any systematic relationship between language elements, forms, text types or genres and the roles and statuses defined by culture.[12] Thus, for instance, already Whorf points out that cultural standards and discursive patterns evolve simultaneously, where a certain limit is presented by language as a system, and not just a random set of standards (Whorf; Sapir, Whorf, as cited in Južnič, 1983, p. 160). Attention to the systemic regulation of both discursive patterns and language versions as individual language elements is drawn also by e.g. Škiljan (1999, p. 165–209), who speaks about a triple standard: linguistic, socio-linguistic and pragmatic. During the last decades, the relationship between the language code and social practices has been systematically dealt with by social semiotics. The latter observes and structures semiotic resources into a system, and explores the use of the resources in the creation and interpretation of messages in specific historical, cultural and institutional contexts (Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3–6).

Therefore, the choice of linguistic elements and forms in communication is not random, and we do not select it again and again on the basis of a detailed analysis of a wider or narrower context. An assessment of linguistic or discursive adequacy depends on mutual, systemically regulated relationships between synonymous or identical types of discourse, words and language forms. These relationships reflect cultural values, viewpoints and standards related to language. Or in the words of Ochs (2003, p. 108): "Vital to competent participation in social groups is the ability to understand how people use language and other symbolic tools to construct social situations. In every community, members draw upon communicative forms to sign social information; indeed, one of the important functions of grammar and lexicon is to key interlocutors into what kind of social situation is taking place."

On the basis of the relationship between language and culture defined in such way, we can conclude that a language-minded person has to be also made culturally aware. In addition to understanding the role and importance of language elements in a specific speech situation, and in relation to other systemically defined options, one must also understand how culture co-shapes the language and one´s own linguistic behaviour, beliefs, evaluation and basic assumptions.[13]

Development of language and cultural awareness in first language teaching

The fact of how we understand the role and importance of language and linguistic cultural awareness in teaching first language largely depends on the fact whether we set up functional or critical communicative competence as our principle objective.[14]

If the principle objective of first language teaching is to develop functional communicative competence, language is considered primarily as a tool for communication and achieving the desired effect. The main objective of such teaching is to train students to understand texts in a typical speech situation, to use data from texts, and to create comprehensible texts of the same type. Consequently, students mostly analyse non-fiction texts in terms of semantic, pragmatic and linguistic aspect and observe the role of language elements in a specific set of circumstances (they learn language by fragments, using the principle of direct applicability). Better achievement of this objective could be facilitated by traditional language awareness, which allows focusing attention on language problems in

---

[12] Some authors, e.g. Byram (2012, p. 6), believe that only the first and the second aspects matter for the debate on the relationship between language and cultural awareness. However, these authors mostly focus on teaching foreign language, which means that they observe the relationship between language and culture in the context of multi-culturalism (at macro level), while associating the linguistic aspect mainly with the grammar, i.e. with the system-defined role of specific language elements within one of the used languages.

[13] c.f. *www.culturaldiversity.com.au*.

[14] Different models of literacy or communicative competence, as understood in the Slovenian educational area, are defined in Vendramin, 2005; Rupnik Vec & Kompare, 2006; and Hrženjak, 2004.

a particular communication situation, a reflection on the role and importance of "problematic" language elements or forms, and on replacing them with another, more effective ones. Such model of first language teaching was established in Slovenia through the curriculum of 1998, but it does not explicitly highlight language awareness.

In such model of first language teaching cultural linguistic awareness is being systematically developed only within the areas of learning about the history of standard language and describing the socio-linguistic situation; and it is based on the assumption that language is inseparably linked to the national culture. Therefore, the condition for a proper linguistic activity is the knowledge of one´s own culture, understanding of what individual concepts, persons, events, happenings mean within culture, ... as well as a positive attitude towards it. According to the 1998 curriculum, students develop awareness of the fact that the mother tongue is the most natural socialisation context of a person, and that for a majority of students, Slovenian language is a fundamental component of personal, national and civic awareness and, together with literature, also the most important part of the Slovenian cultural heritage; and they learn about the position and role of Slovenian language in the Republic of Slovenia and beyond its borders.

This model, therefore, treats communicative competence within narrow, external contextual determinants, while treating cultural awareness as abstract category, not associated with the specific act of language use in current circumstances. Consequently, language and cultural awareness in teaching the first language are developed separately.

If the principle objective of first language teaching is to develop critical communicative competence, language use and learning is closely related to critical thinking and placed not only into external circumstances, but also into wider social, political and cultural context (Graff, 1995, as cited in Vendramin, 2005, p. 76). Communication is no longer considered just a cognitive skill and ability, but a cultural and social practice, which deals with ideologies, identities and values at least as much as with the code and skills (cf. Vendramin, 2005, p. 76). Therefore, one of the main assumptions in language teaching should be the fact that each communication is also a social and cultural act, which means that it is not equally accessible to everyone. Differences appear already at a cognitive level, for example, as a result of culture-defined concepts, which a member of a specific culture associates with a specific, maybe seemingly quite unequivocal expression,[15] due to culture-specific patterns of behaviour and communication.

These findings are important in teaching the first language not only for the development of critical cultural awareness at the national level, but also at least as much since the national culture and national language consist of numerous micro cultures and their language versions. This means that when communicating in the first language, we are actually constantly facing so-called internal multiculturalism or internal or discursive multilingualism.[16] Appropriate language activity in the first language – similarly as in intercultural dialogue at national level – requires, in addition to understanding the text in actual circumstances and the knowledge of one´s own culture, a commitment to critical and intercultural communication, sensitivity to a wider context, taking into account the

---

[15] For instance, the word Protestantism, which elsewhere marks one of religious reform movements, is in the Slovenian area rather than with religious movement associated with cultural activity of Protestants that developed Slovenian literary language and wrote the first books in Slovenian language. Consequently, the word *Protestantism* has mostly positive connotations and is associated with progress, cultural development, national awareness, and as such, it is often used as an argument.

[16] "Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw" (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, 2001, p. 168).

different dimensions of communication, assessing on the basis of clear criteria, ability of metacognition, and ethical responsibility (Rupnik Vec & Kompare, 2006).

These findings are partly followed by the updated curriculum for Slovenian language as the first language, which was adopted in 2008, because it sets up as a principle objective a critical communicative competence, which comprises, in addition to the ability of accepting and creating the texts of certain text types, also metalinguistic and partially metacognitive competence and cultural awareness. However, even the new syllabus has not overcome certain restrictions of functionally oriented communication teaching and traditional understanding of language awareness. Thus, for example, metacognition refers only to the student's reflection on the usefulness of the newly acquired knowledge; metalinguistic knowledge is still learned by fragments, according to the principle of applicability in current circumstances and not also in terms of systemically regulated relationships between the synonymous language elements or forms; and, finally, the identification function of language is related mainly to abstract standard language and its national symbolic role, being therefore actually developed in a traditional way.

Conclusion

The discussion has shown that one of the fundamental guides in modern teaching of the first language should be a critical language awareness, which could be defined as a person's motivated and ethical language activity, based on positive attitude towards language, on the understanding and reflection of language use in the wider socio-cultural context with respect to different dimensions of language, and on the ability to evaluate it on the basis of knowledge about the functions, rules, principles, forms of language, even in their system organisation. Only language awareness, which includes both, awareness of communication and identification function of language, ensures the development of critical speakers and thinkers. It was also shown that in the didactics of Slovenian language as the first language, despite the changes, we have not yet found the answer to the question how to overcome an unrelated development of the language and linguistic cultural awareness.

So it seems that it would be first necessary to rethink the understanding of some basic principles of first language teaching. These are, for instance, the principle of contextualisation, which should also encourage the students to empathize with the socially/culturally determined roles; the principle of metacognition and evaluation on the basis of arguments, which should also include a reflection on socio-cultural determination and emotional dimension of selected language forms; the principle of systemization, which should be oriented to learning about both linguistic, pragmatic and socio-linguistic standards; the principle of motivation, which would, in addition to direct motivation to participate in a specific speech act, also encourage more general engagement for critical communication; and above all, the principle of complexity, which should result from the comprehension that language and language activities in teaching the first language cannot be related only to cognitive dimension of language use and to communication function in a particular set of external circumstances, but should also include the awareness of the identification function of language and its emotional dimensions.

References

Bergoč, S. (2010). *Slovenščina med Balkanom in Evropo*. Koper: Univerzitetna založba Annales.

Byram, M. (2011). Language awareness and (critical) cultural awareness – relationships, comparisons and contrasts. *Language Awareness*, 21. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09658416.2011.639887

Christie, F. (1989). Preface. In Halliday, *Spoken and written language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Čok, L. (2009). Evropska dimenzija izobraževanja za dvojezičnost. In Čok, L. (Ed.), *Izobraževanje za dvojezičnost v kontekstu evropskih integracijskih procesov.* Koper: Založba Annales.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: *Learning, teaching, assessment*. (2001). Council of Europe.

Gomezel Mikolič, V. (1999/2000). Povezanost narodne in jezikovne zavesti. *Jezik in slovstvo*, 45(1), 173–185.

Grosman, M. (2010). Kakšne pismenosti potrebujemo za 21. stoletje. *Sodobna pedagogika*, 1, 16–26.

James, C. & Garrett, P. (Eds.) (1992). *Language awareness in the classroom.* New York: Longman.

Južnič, S. (1983). *Lingvistična antropologija*. Ljubljana: FSPN. Dopisna delavska univerza Univerzum.

Kramsch, C. (Ed.) (2003). *Language Acquisition and Language Socialization. Ecological Perspectives.* London, New York: Continuum.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). Language acquisition and language use from a chaos/complexity theory perspective. In Kramsch, C. (Ed.). *Language Acquisition and Language Socialization* (p. 33-46)*.* London, New York: Continuum.

Leeuwen, van T. (2005). *Introducing social semiotics*. New York, Abingdon: Routledge.

Lemke, Jay L., (2003)*.* Language development and identity: Multiple timescales in the social ecology of learning. In Kramsch, C. (Ed.), *Language Acquisition and Language Socialization. Ecological Perspectives* (p. 68–87). London, New York: Continuum.

Ochs, E. (2003). Becoming a speaker of culture. In Kramsch, C. (Ed.), *Language acquisition and language socialization* (p. 99-120). London, New York: Continuum.

Osula, B. & Irvin, S. M. (2009). Cultural Awareness in Intercultural Mentoring: A Model for Enhancing Mentoring Relationships. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 5. Retrieved from https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol5iss1/home.htm

Prtic Soons, M. (2008). *The Importance of Language Awareness*. Malmö: Malmö högskola.

Quappe, S. & Cantatore, G. (2005). *What is culture awareness anyway?* Retrieved from http://www.culturosity.com/pdfs/What%20is%20Cultural%20Awareness.pdf

Rupnik Vec, T. & Kompare, A. (2006). *Kritično mišljenje v šoli*. Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo.

Saniei, A.(2012). Developing Cultural Awareness in Language Instructional Materials. *International Conference of Language, Medias and Culture,* 33, p. 10–15. Singapore: IACSIT Press.

Schmidt, R. (Ed.) (1995). *Attention and Awareness in Foreign Language Learning*. Honolulu: University of Honolulu Press.

Svalberg, A. M. L. (2009). Engagement with language: Interrogating a construct. *Language Awareness*, 18 (3–4), 242–258.

Škiljan, D. (1999). *Javni jezik*. Ljubljana: Studia humanitatis.

Ule Nastran, M. (2005). *Psihologija komuniciranja*. Ljubljana: FDV.

Website *InterNations:* Cultural Awareness. Retried from http://www.internations.org/magazine/cultural-awareness-15426

Contact

Jerca Vogel
Department of Slovenian Studies
Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Jerica.Vogel@ff.uni-lj.si