

A review of teacher language awareness (2015-2024): Current trends and future directions¹

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Abstract

Teacher language awareness (TLA) encompasses language teachers' competencies in using language, analyzing language, and teaching language (Lindahl, 2019). As these competencies directly influence how teachers teach language and the effectiveness of their instruction, TLA has garnered growing interest in recent years, resulting in an expanding body of research. Against this backdrop, this review first briefly clarifies the definitions and boundaries of TLA, highlighting the importance of integrating critical language awareness into TLA. It then analyzes the working mechanisms of TLA, followed by a selective review of empirical research (2015-2024) on the effect of TLA on teachers' beliefs and practices, the current state of TLA, mediating factors, and the strategies for developing TLA. The review concludes by emphasizing the relevance of social and power dynamics in TLA and discussing current trends and future directions for TLA research.

Keywords teacher language awareness, critical language awareness, language teachers

1. Introduction

Teacher language awareness (TLA) refers to “teachers’ cognitions (knowledge and beliefs) about language in general and the language they teach” (Andrews & Svalberg, 2017, p. 219). In line with the three necessary areas of competency for language teachers outlined by Edge (1988), TLA encompasses teachers’ roles as language users (how they use language), language analysts (what they know about language), and language teachers (how they help develop learners’ language competencies) (Lindahl, 2019). Furthermore, some scholars have suggested that a critical perspective on power relations should be incorporated into TLA (e.g., Garcia, 2017; Chang, Torres-Guzmán & Waring, 2020). Given its multifaceted nature, as well as the essential relationship between teaching and learning—and, by extension, teachers’ competencies and learners’ learning outcomes—a substantial body of research has emerged, exploring various aspects of TLA. These include teachers’ linguistic landscape, their linguistic ideology, and their classroom practices under the influence of TLA, to name a few. To better understand the current state of TLA research and to further promote its development, it is necessary to sort out these studies. To this end, this review first clarifies the definitions and boundaries of TLA, emphasizing the importance of integrating critical language awareness into TLA. It then illustrates the

working mechanisms of TLA. Following this, the review examines existing research on TLA, including the impact of TLA on teachers’ beliefs and practices, the current state of TLA across various contexts, the mediating factors of TLA, and methods for fostering TLA. Finally, it reiterates the significance of the social and power dynamics in TLA and outlines current trends and future directions for TLA research.

2. Definitions and boundaries of TLA

While TLA extends beyond language teachers, the language awareness of these educators has garnered special attention, with most of the studies reviewed below focusing on these teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to deliberately explore the definitions and scopes of language teachers’ TLA, especially that of second language (L2) teachers.

Thornbury (1997) defines TLA as “the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively” (p. x). In this view, TLA is essentially concerned with teachers’ subject matter knowledge and its impact on teaching. Based on Thornbury’s definition, Andrews (1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2003) proposes a more complicated framework for the TLA of L2 teachers, which includes subject matter knowledge, communicative language ability, and reflection “upon that knowledge and ability, and upon her knowledge

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of the underlying systems of the language, in order to ensure that her students receive maximally useful input for learning” (Andrews, 1999a, p. 163). Along with subject matter knowledge, Andrews’ TLA emphasizes the reflection dimension of TLA and stresses teachers’ consideration of subject matter knowledge from learners’ perspective.

Building on these foundational elements, Andrews (2001) discusses the relationship between TLA and pedagogical content knowledge, the “amalgam of content and pedagogy” (Shulman, 1986, p.8). Believing that pedagogical content knowledge encompasses many aspects not covered by TLA, and yet is too general to fully describe the complexities of language teachers’ work, Andrews proposes that TLA should be viewed not as a synonym for pedagogical content knowledge, but as a key subcomponent of it, serving as a bridge between language competence/strategic competence, the major component of communicative language ability, and knowledge of subject matter, a central part of pedagogical content knowledge. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship among TLA, communicative language ability, and pedagogical content knowledge.

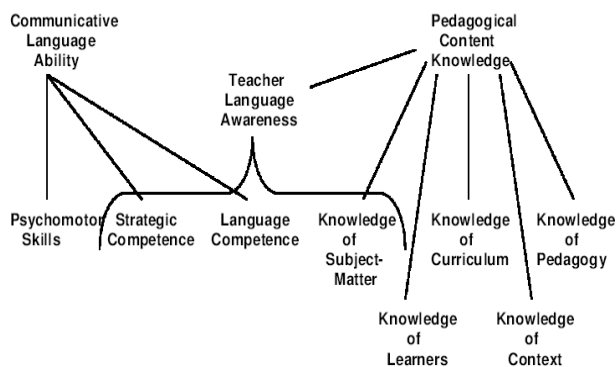


Figure 1. TLA, communicative language ability, and pedagogical content knowledge (Andrews, 2001, p.79)

Kumaravadivelu (2003) distinguishes between two types of language awareness: general language awareness, awareness of linguistic and sociolinguistic features that govern language usage, and critical language awareness (also see Fairclough, 1990), awareness of social and political factors influencing language use. In the twenty-first century, multilingual schools are prevalent globally (Garcia, 2017). The increasing linguistic diversity in schools necessitates a shift from monolingual ideologies to a multilingual perspective that recognizes and values hybrid language practices. This shift not only promotes dynamic linguistic practices and diverse identities but also underscores the importance of cultivating critical language awareness among minoritized students. To achieve this, educators must develop a critical awareness of language dynamics. This issue falls squarely within the realm of critical language awareness, which emphasizes the need for teachers to engage with the complexities of language in multilingual contexts. Andrews’ (1999a) conceptualization of TLA places significant emphasis on the cognitive and metacognitive dimensions of language awareness. However, it appears to overlook the critical aspects that are

essential for effective teaching, particularly in contexts characterized by multilingualism and the risk of language complacency. In classrooms with learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds, the importance of critical language awareness is pronounced. How can we expect a teacher lacking critical awareness to foster linguistic tolerance among students from both mainstream and minority language backgrounds, or to equip them to confront prejudice and antagonism? Therefore, we align with Garcia (2017) and Chang et al. (2020) in advocating for the incorporation of critical multilingual language awareness in teacher education.

3. Working mechanisms of TLA

How do teachers utilize their TLA in their teaching? How does TLA influence their instructional methods and the learning experiences of their students? A model addressing these questions is Andrews’ (1999a) input structuring model, illustrated in Figure 2.

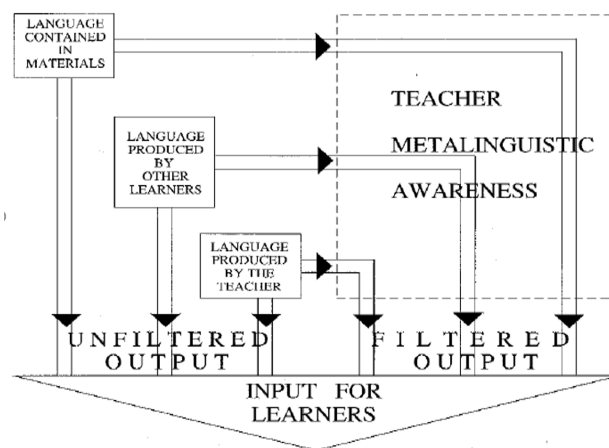


Figure 2. The role of TLA in structuring input for learners (Andrews, 1999a, p.166)

Andrews (1999a) employs the ‘filter’ metaphor to depict the interaction between input—which serves as a precondition for learning—and TLA. As shown in Figure 2, there are three primary sources of input for the learner: materials, other learners, and the teacher. The language output of these sources may or may not pass through the TLA “filter” (teacher metalinguistic awareness) before reaching the learner as input. Consequently, input from these sources can reach learners in two ways: as “unfiltered” input—directly and without teacher mediation—or as “filtered” input, where the teacher modifies the content before presenting it to the learner. Teachers with a high level of TLA tend to have a deeper understanding of their students’ learning needs and challenges. As a result, they can better curate L2 input, ensuring that it is more appropriate and effective for their students. Since input plays a vital role in L2 acquisition, the teaching methods employed by informed teachers are likely to yield better outcomes. These insights into the impact of TLA are detailed in the Table below (Andrews, 2001).

In Andrews’ (1999a) input structuring model, the pivotal factor influencing input is teachers’ metalinguistic awareness. Consequently, the advantages of TLA are

predominantly centered on the acquisition of linguistic features, especially the accuracy of language use. When we consider critical language awareness as an extension of Andrews' TLA, it can serve as an additional filter within the learning process. For instance, if a learner exhibits complacency—or, conversely, defensiveness—regarding their language use during classroom interactions, a teacher with a robust level of critical language awareness is more likely to detect this phenomenon. Such a teacher is also more inclined to provide constructive feedback, initiate pertinent discussions, or undertake other interventions that facilitate learners' recognition of the status of their

mother tongue in relation to other languages. This process effectively equips students to counter linguistic prejudice and bias. In this context, critical TLA serves a dual function: it filters learners' linguistic attitudes, providing attitudinal input for the individual learner while simultaneously generating attitudinal input for their peers. In contrast, a teacher with minimal or no critical TLA may fail to recognize signs of complacency or antagonism in a learner's language output, ultimately hindering the learner's development of a constructive attitude toward language diversity.

Table 1. TLA in the classroom (Source: Andrews, 2001, p. 82)

Impact of TLA in the classroom	
Positive	Negative
Teacher acts as a bridge between the language content of the materials and the learners, making salient the key features of the grammar area.	Teacher does little or nothing to act as a bridge/make salient the key features of the grammar area (e.g. doesn't go beyond the language content as presented in the materials).
Teacher 'filters' the content of published materials, and notices/avoids potential pitfalls.	Teacher is unwilling/unable to 'filter' content. As a result, teacher may overlook or accept misconceptions and/or inaccuracies in materials.
Teacher 'filters' own classroom output (spoken and written) to ensure that it is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structurally accurate • functionally appropriate • clearly expressed • pitched at the learners' level • an adequate basis for learner generalisations 	Teacher does not appear to 'filter' own classroom output (spoken and/or written). As a result, teacher's output may be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structurally inaccurate • functionally inappropriate • confusingly expressed • pitched at an inappropriate level for the learners • an inadequate basis for learner generalisations
Teacher 'filters' learner output (as appropriate in the context of form-focused activity). Mediation takes the learners' perspective into account, and is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct, precise and intelligible • structurally accurate • functionally appropriate • pitched at the learners' level • an adequate basis for learner generalisations 	Teacher's mediation of learner output in form-focused activity is inadequate. As a result, incorrect learner output may be ignored, the learners' perspective may not be taken into account, and teacher mediation may be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorrect, imprecise and/or unintelligible • structurally inaccurate • functionally inappropriate • pitched at an inappropriate level for the learners • an inadequate basis for learner generalisations
Teacher is able to operate 'filter' in 'real time', reacting spontaneously and constructively to issues of language content as they arise in class.	Teacher has difficulty in operating 'filter' in 'real time', and in reacting spontaneously and constructively to issues of language content as they arise in class.
Teacher is able to employ metalanguage to support learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correctly • appropriately 	Teacher's use of metalanguage to support learning is incorrect and/or inappropriate (e.g. excessive, or at a level beyond the learners' comprehension)

In summary, TLA significantly influences pedagogical practices by filtering the input provided to learners. As a result, a heightened level of TLA correlates with improved teaching efficacy and enhanced learning results. TLA-informed teaching not only facilitates learners' language development, deepening their understanding of linguistic concepts, but also fosters an inclusive classroom environment that celebrates multilingualism, encouraging a positive attitude in learners toward their own languages

and those of others.

4. Empirical research on TLA

Existing research has explored the impact of TLA on teachers' beliefs and practices, its current state, the mediating factors involved, and its cultivation. This section provides a selective review of studies related to these themes, guided by three criteria: 1) the studies were

published from 2015 onwards; 2) the studies addressed either the linguistic or the critical domains of TLA, or both; and 3) since critical language awareness often involves multilingualism, and multilingualism is relevant to all teachers—not just language teachers—studies that involved other educators working in multilingual contexts, regardless of the subject they teach, were also considered.

4.1. Effect of TLA

The effect of TLA has long been acknowledged; however, it remains a relevant research topic, with some studies focusing on its impact on teachers' beliefs about language and language teaching and others on teachers' pedagogical practices.

4.1.1. Effect of TLA on teacher beliefs

The impact of TLA on teacher beliefs has gained significant attention. Lindahl and Henderson (2019) conducted a comprehensive study with in-service teachers of emergent bilinguals in a dual language immersion context. Drawing on data from a language ideology survey and written reflections on open-ended survey items and follow-up interviews, they found that participants with higher degrees of TLA in the teacher domain (compared to the analyst and user domains) rejected misconceptions about language instruction (e.g., emphasizing implicit instruction over explicit instruction and viewing L2 acquisition as mere imitation) while participants with lower degrees of TLA at the teacher domain perpetuated these misconceptions. The researchers also found that teachers with different degrees of TLA held different language ideologies. For example, one teacher with a high degree of TLA in the teacher domain viewed languages other than English as valuable assets and beautiful tools of communication like English. Another teacher with a low degree of TLA in the teacher domain, by contrast, held raciolinguistic ideologies, viewing Spanish as “gangster stuff” and equating the language practices of first language (L1) Spanish speakers to stereotypes about Latinos.

Alisaari, Heikkola, Commins, and Acquah (2019) also found a correlation between TLA and teachers' beliefs. Using an online survey, their study investigated 820 Finnish teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and teaching multilingual Finnish language learners, and the factors influencing these beliefs. It was found that teachers' awareness of linguistically responsive teaching, along with other variables such as teachers' teaching area and their experience in teaching migrant students, significantly influenced their beliefs about multilingualism. Compared to those with lower levels of awareness, teachers with higher levels of awareness held more supportive beliefs about multilingualism and tended to have stronger opinions about home languages being valuable assets for Finnish language development.

Manan and David (2021) examined how the lack of critical multilingual language awareness among educators in Pakistan reinforced and perpetuated negative ideas about language and language education in a diverse multilingual setting. Drawing on interview and survey data, the study demonstrated that participants had little critical multilingual language awareness that could help them challenge the official construction of languages and

language hierarchies or envision an alternative policy paradigm where the status of marginalized languages could be elevated. As a result, participants held monoglossic ideologies, devalued native languages/cultures, formed normative assumptions about contemporary sociolinguistic order, developed an English-medium fever, and constructed fallacious folk theories about plurilingualism and multilingual education.

The studies reviewed above represent only a small portion of the existing literature on the relationship between TLA and teacher beliefs. However, their findings consistently indicate a significant impact of TLA on teachers' beliefs. Given that teachers' beliefs play a crucial role in shaping their pedagogical intentions and practices (e.g., Lundberg, 2019), it is reasonable to conclude that TLA exerts a meaningful influence on teaching.

4.1.2. Effect of TLA on pedagogical practices

The impact of TLA on teachers' instructional practices is well documented in the literature. Early studies, particularly those conducted by Andrews (1997, 1999a, 1999b) among secondary school teachers in Hongkong, demonstrated the significant impact of teachers' language awareness on language teaching. More recently, Xu and Harfitt (2019), examined the relationship between TLA and the scaffolding strategies employed by two secondary school teachers within Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) contexts in Hong Kong. Their analysis of data from semi-structured interviews and video-recorded lessons revealed that TLA significantly influenced the teachers' decisions regarding the provision of conceptual scaffolding related to language learning in CLIL environments. Additionally, the findings indicated that the teachers' awareness of language from learners' perspective helped guide them in optimizing how, when and to whom scaffolding is provided. These findings provide further evidence for the critical role of TLA in language education practices.

Another recent study on the effect TLA on teaching is Gordon and Arias's (2024) examination of the impact of an experienced English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher's metalanguage knowledge on explicit pronunciation instruction in an L2 context. Employing qualitative data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated-recall interviews, the researchers found that the teacher's metalanguage knowledge significantly influenced the execution of explicit L2 pronunciation instruction and shaped the linguistic resources available to learners across various classroom activities. This study further highlights the importance of teachers' metalinguistic competencies in facilitating effective language instruction.

One study illustrating the impact of critical TLA on teaching practices is Haim and Tannenbaum's (2022) investigation of the relationship between Israeli EFL teachers' beliefs about the language learning needs of immigrant students and their reported classroom practices. Using data from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, the study found a significant link between teachers' beliefs and their reported practices. Specifically, the teachers' belief in multilingualism as a resource was a strong predictor of practices related to

reliance on the learners' L1 in the classroom, the use of special materials, and the use of cultural adjustments.

Similarly, Xu and Krulatz (2023) explored the relationship between 181 Norwegian language and subject teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and the multilingual teaching practices they reported. The results of an online survey showed a significant positive correlation between teachers' beliefs and their reported practices. For example, the teachers' beliefs about the importance of utilizing students' linguistic repertoires were significantly correlated with all the pedagogical items in the survey, except for facilitating multilingual literacy. This correlation indicates a middle to large effect regarding practices such as considering students' linguistic backgrounds when grouping, optimizing the use of multilingual students' linguistic repertoires, and providing opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in their heritage language.

The findings of Haim and Tannenbaum (2022) and Xu and Krulatz (2023) resonate with those of other studies (e.g., Nugraheni, Nurkamto & Putra, 2023; Osidak, Natsiuk & Vogt, 2024). While not all these studies explicitly referred to TLA, teachers' understanding of immigrant students' learning needs and multilingualism is part of TLA. Therefore, the studies offered valuable insights into the impact of TLA on teaching practices.

4.2. Current state of TLA

Recognizing the importance of TLA, some researchers have explored its current state among teachers. In response to the call for greater attention to critical language awareness, most of the studies we reviewed focused on teachers' ideologies and beliefs about multilingualism and multilingualism-informed pedagogy.

Haukås (2016) investigated the beliefs of 12 Norwegian teachers of French, German, and Spanish regarding multilingualism and the implementation of a multilingual pedagogical approach in third language (L3) classrooms. Drawing on data from focus group discussions with the teachers, the study found that participants viewed multilingualism as a potentially positive asset. However, while believing that multilingualism had benefited their own language learning, they did not consider it automatically beneficial for students. Additionally, while the teachers believed that collaboration across languages could enhance learners' language learning, such collaboration is not currently taking place.

Romanowski (2024) reported similar results in a study examining L3 foreign language teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and multilingual pedagogies in two secondary schools in Warsaw, Poland. Analysis of interview data revealed that while these teachers recognized the benefits of multilingualism for their own language learning, they simultaneously believed that young students—who began learning English at a very early age—could not fully benefit from it.

Hammou, Trimasse, and Elghazi (2024) documented similar findings. They investigated 169 Moroccan English teachers' beliefs about the potential benefits of multilingualism in the L3 English classroom. Using a mixed-methods approach, analysis of data from

questionnaires and semi-structured interviews revealed that participants generally held moderate positive beliefs about the potential of multilingualism as an asset to the L3 English classroom, demonstrating a partial/moderate awareness of the usefulness of multilingualism.

A very different study is Vikøy and Haukås' (2023) investigation of teacher beliefs about multilingualism. Believing that L1 subject is a central meeting place for all students, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds, the researchers investigated Norwegian L1 teachers' beliefs about how L1 instruction can be implemented in classrooms with diverse linguistic profiles. Data collected through focus group discussions of 10 upper secondary school teachers revealed that most of the teachers viewed their students' multilingualism as a problem and found it challenging to improve minority students' Norwegian skills. Moreover, the teachers reported that they rarely leveraged the multilinguistic backgrounds of minority students as a useful tool in class.

Overall, existing studies indicate that teachers often do not fully acknowledge the importance of learners' multilingualism. Therefore, nearly all these studies emphasized the need for increased awareness among teachers regarding the benefits of multilingualism, highlighting the necessity for enhanced practices in teacher education and professional development.

4.3. Mediating factors of TLA

To maximize the positive effect of TLA, it is necessary to foster it in teachers. To do that, it is essential to identify and understand the various factors that influence its development. Although research on this topic is still limited, existing studies have started to reveal key insights into the elements that shape teachers' awareness of language use and its implications for teaching.

Burton, Wong, and Rajendram (2024) explored the intersection of translanguaging and critical multilingual language awareness in preparing teacher candidates to support multilingual learners in elementary classrooms. Analysis of the candidates' unit and lesson plans, course assignments, reflections, and interviews revealed that their language learning experiences, challenges, and identities significantly shaped their developing translanguaging stance. While the candidates viewed translanguaging as temporary support rather than a means to challenge English dominance in curriculum and assessment, they nonetheless integrated various translanguaging strategies and resources to promote learners' socioemotional well-being and language development.

Otwinowska (2017) examined the influence of multilingualism on 233 Polish teachers of English with varying language knowledge beyond English (L3-Ln) and surveyed their attitudes toward multilingual pedagogy principles. Data analysis indicated that the teachers' multilingual backgrounds enhanced their plurilingual awareness and willingness to adopt multilingual teaching approaches. Specifically, highly multilingual teachers were more willing than bilingual teachers to rely on cross-linguistic similarities in teaching English, and the number of languages teachers knew beyond L2 and their

proficiency levels in these languages significantly affected the degrees of their self-reported willingness to use cross-linguistic similarities in teaching. These findings led the researcher to conclude that teachers' cross-linguistic and metalinguistic awareness, and their recognition of the importance of referencing other languages while teaching English, are influenced by their proficiency in multiple languages.

Another insightful study on the influencing factors of TLA is Strobbe and colleagues' (2017) examination of how the linguistic compositions of students affected Belgian teachers' perceptions and practices concerning multilingualism. Combining multilevel regression analyses of survey data from 1255 teachers in 67 schools and focus group discussions among teachers and headmasters in 10 schools, the study revealed that variations in the linguistic makeup of student populations led to differing levels of tolerance towards multilingualism in school teams. Qualitative data showed that schools with no or very few students speaking languages other than Dutch were discussed in far more positive terms than mixed schools (linguistically diverse schools) and minority dominant schools (schools predominantly composed of children who speak the same ethnic minority language), and both qualitative and quantitative analyses showed that levels of tolerance were higher in mixed schools than in minority and majority dominant schools (schools with a vast majority of Dutch-speaking children).

To summarize, emerging research is beginning to shed light on the mediating factors of TLA. Despite the relatively small number of studies available in the literature we identified, the findings are enlightening. Continued exploration in this area has the potential to deepen our understanding of TLA and to inform more effective strategies for cultivating it, ultimately better supporting diverse learners in multilingual classrooms.

4.4. Cultivation of TLA

Given the importance of TLA and its inadequacy among teachers, the cultivation of TLA has become a prominent issue in recent years. Research has been conducted at both the linguistic level—examining teachers' knowledge of language, metalanguage, and the language learning process—and the critical level—addressing the social dynamics and power relations in TLA, particularly concerning multilingualism. Before delving into existing studies, it is necessary to note that in the review below, reflection is considered with a dual role: both as a method for cultivating TLA and as a tool for data collection. Moreover, reflection as a key strategy for TLA cultivation has been explored at both the linguistic and critical levels.

4.4.1. Cultivation of TLA at the linguistic level

Due to the extensive existing research on language teachers' knowledge base, including their knowledge about language and learners, there is currently a diminished focus on the cultivation of TLA at the linguistic level. Still, for pre-service teachers, a range of approaches has been proposed, though they require further investigation, such as a cognitive linguistics-inspired approach, the use of experienced teachers' portraits, metalinguistic coursework, reflective practice, and international online cooperation.

(1) Cognitive Linguistics-Inspired Approach. Giebler (2015) conducted a study to examine EFL student teachers' responses to a cognitive linguistics-inspired approach to vocabulary teaching. Analysis of questionnaires and reflective writing indicated that the student teachers recognized the benefits of this approach, suggesting that applied cognitive linguistics can enhance their language awareness and broaden their lexical understanding.

(2) Use of Portraits. Howerton-Fox, Falk, and Kretschmer (2023) presented the portrait of an experienced teacher in a Swedish bilingual school for the deaf, showcasing how she applied her knowledge of learners to teach grammatical structures in both signed and spoken languages. The researchers proposed integrating such portraits into teacher preparation curricula to better equip educators for the deaf and hard of hearing.

(3) Metalinguistic Coursework. McNeil (2018) examined the impact of metalinguistic coursework on pre-service teachers' phonological, orthographic, and morphological awareness, as well as their ability to apply this knowledge in spelling assessments. The results indicated that the cohort's test scores surpassed those of a pre-service comparison group and approached those of an in-service group, demonstrating the coursework's effectiveness.

(4) Reflective Practice. Dubiner (2018) explored how reflection affected non-native pre-service EFL teachers' understanding of vocabulary acquisition strategies and their teaching skills. The study, which combined vocabulary notebook reflections, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews, revealed that reflective learning promoted pedagogical and metacognitive development while enhancing understanding of vocabulary acquisition processes.

(5) International Online Cooperation. Finkbeiner and colleagues (2024) studied the effects of international online collaboration on prospective teachers' language and cultural awareness. Multilingual student groups from Germany and Israel co-constructed educational websites and engaged in online learning, conferences, and face-to-face meetings. The 10-week collaboration significantly enhanced participants' language awareness, cultural awareness, and perceived English proficiency.

For in-service teachers, research is quite limited in the literature we identified, but two notable methods have been proposed to enhance their linguistic awareness: in-service training and dialogic inquiry. Xerri (2015) interviewed five education officers who coordinated an in-service TLA course in Malta, along with 12 trainers who designed and delivered the course. The interviews revealed that the training effectively provided teachers with the knowledge and confidence necessary for successful language instruction. Wallen and Kelly-Holmes (2017) employed dialogic inquiry to increase teachers' language awareness. Through guiding questions, teachers explored personal theories, generated collective insights, and compared these theories to established frameworks, focusing on four themes: L1 and L2 acquisition, stages of language learning, the use of the L1 in the classroom, and motivation in language learning. The findings indicated that dialogic inquiry, facilitated through a teacher network,

significantly enhanced mainstream primary teachers' awareness of the language acquisition processes and the linguistic contexts of their emergent bilingual students.

4.4.2. Cultivation of TLA at the critical level

In recent years, the number of TLA initiatives at the critical level has significantly outpaced those at the linguistic level. As a result, various approaches have been proposed to develop critical TLA, particularly for pre-service teachers. Some of the approaches that appear more often in the literature include TLA courses, reflective activities, and TLA projects.

(1) TLA Courses. Teacher education courses designed to promote TLA at the critical level are among the most frequently reported approaches. Mary and Young (2023) reported on a project-based elective course in France aimed at empowering student teachers to challenge monolingual mindsets. By collaborating with children and families, student teachers developed initiatives such as bilingual books, story bags, and multilingual music collections. Data collected from pre- and post-course questionnaires, student portfolios, written reflections, and working group minutes indicated that the course successfully shifted prospective teachers' perspectives on monolingualism. Similarly, Van Gorp and colleagues (2023) investigated the impact of coursework on a novice language teacher educator and a pre-service teacher's evolving understanding of the five language awareness domains: cognitive, social, affective, performance, and power (James & Garret, 1991), in the United States. Their analysis of interview data and course artifacts revealed that the coursework effectively fostered participants' critical multilingual language awareness, particularly when they connected the material to their personal experiences. Additionally, Zhang-Wu and Tian (2023) examined the effects of a translanguaging-infused teacher education course on content area teacher candidates' development of critical language awareness. While the prospective teachers faced challenges in implementing critical translanguaging practices, they demonstrated emerging critical language awareness at the ideological level.

(2) Reflective practice. Similar to the cultivation of language awareness at the linguistic level, reflection is crucial for developing pre-service teachers' critical language awareness, both as a standalone practice and in combination with other activities. Building on a sociocultural perspective of language and learning, Gage (2020) analyzed student teachers' reflections following carefully designed, collaborative, student-centered activities that modeled a praxis of language awareness. The findings revealed that student teachers gained insights into collaboration and learning with and from peers, as well as a deeper understanding of the distinction between equity and equality in education. Rocafort (2019) investigated the impact of multimodal narrative reflections on transforming a pre-service teacher's beliefs about language education. Analysis of these reflections showed that, while some beliefs were deeply entrenched, reflection facilitated a shift from viewing language mastery as a goal to embracing the development of a plurilingual repertoire. Shi and Rolstad (2020) conducted a discursive analysis of pre-service teachers' written reflections on

critical language awareness, identifying three major patterns of change: moving from generic statements to deeper scrutiny, shifting from broad suggestions to specific recommendations, and transitioning from asserting the known to expressing curiosity about the unknown. Based on these findings, it was suggested that teacher educators should help pre-service teachers engage in continuous self-reflection.

(3) TLA Project. Efforts to enhance TLA through well-designed projects have shown promising results. For example, Cárdenas Curiel and colleagues (2024) involved pre-service teachers in a linguistic community walk project within the communities served by their field placement schools. The findings suggest that this project helped the teachers move beyond monolingual ideologies by fostering critical reflection on the marginalization of minoritized communities. Mary, Lemoine-Bresson, and Choffat-Dürr (2024) explored the impact of a collaborative research project on the critical language awareness of French teachers participating in a school-wide English immersion program that adopted a one teacher/one language model. Data from semi-structured interviews, filmed observations, stimulated video recall, and focus group sessions indicated that teachers became more aware that students' L1s could serve as valuable resources, leading them to become more willing to experiment with new pedagogies drawing on students' entire linguistic repertoires. Prasad and Heidt (2023) analyzed the effects of a critical metalinguistic awareness project on secondary teacher candidates. The project engaged the candidates as language learners, prompting them to reflect on their experiences as early language learners. Analysis of their written reflections revealed that even brief exposure to learning a new language enabled the candidates to focus not only on the mechanics of teaching multilingual students but also on recognizing the systemic power relations among languages and their users within schools.

In addition to the more commonly reported approaches, other strategies have been explored, such as TLA workshops, multimodal compositions, study abroad, and cross-sectional and institutional discussion.

(4) TLA Workshops. Chang and colleagues (2022) studied the impact of TLA workshops on Chinese bilingual pre-service teachers' development of critical language awareness. Participants initially engaged in collective struggles during language awareness training sessions at a higher education institution, and later acted as facilitators of implementation sessions for schoolteachers. Data from effectiveness surveys, field notes, video recordings, and pre- and post-interviews revealed that these workshops provided meaningful contexts for candidates to deepen their understanding of critical language awareness.

(5) Multimodal Compositions. Deroo and Pozio (2023) investigated how pre-service teachers used multimodal compositions to explore their meaning-making at the intersection of language, identity, and power. Analysis of these compositions, reflective writings, and retrospective interviews demonstrated that participants exhibited varying levels of awareness regarding how language practices influence acceptance, belonging, and access to education, with some recognizing teachers as gatekeepers of language who may uphold or challenge dominant

ideologies.

(6) Study Abroad. Lindahl and colleagues (2020) examined how three distinct study abroad programs in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico contributed to the development of critical multilingual language awareness among 56 pre- and in-service American English as a second language and bilingual teachers. Analysis of survey data indicated that participants' study abroad experience, which include language study, homestay, and volunteering in schools, led to their growth in critical metalinguistic awareness, particularly concerning awareness of language practices and sociopolitical contexts of language.

(7) Cross-Sectional and Institutional Discussion. Shepard-Carey and Gopalakrishnan (2023) explored the potential of cross-sectional and institutional discussions to enhance future English language educators' critical language awareness. Teacher candidates across course sections and institutions discussed topics on critical language awareness and submitted reflections on these interactions. Analysis of the reflections indicated that the discussions fostered reflexivity regarding identity, the identification and critique of language ideologies and practices, and the application of critical language awareness in teaching contexts.

Akin to studies on the cultivation of TLA at the linguistic level, research on critical TLA among in-service teachers is also quite limited. In addition to the above-mentioned study by Lindahl and colleagues (2020), which involved both pre-service and in-service teachers, another two relevant studies are Deroo and Ponzio (2019) and Ducar (2022). Deroo and Ponzio explored how translanguaging could disrupt monolingual ideologies by enhancing in-service teachers' understanding of translanguaging as both a theory and a pedagogical approach. Analysis of teachers' discussion posts, projects through which they synthesized and applied their learning about translanguaging, and phone interviews revealed that adopting translanguaging empowered the teachers to critically reflect on the ways they might have undervalued students' diverse language practices. Furthermore, this awareness encouraged the adoption of pedagogical strategies that viewed students' translanguaging as an essential resource for learning. In a different context, Ducar analyzed the transformation of language attitudes among US high school Spanish teachers enrolled in an online graduate course on Spanish Heritage Language Pedagogy. An examination of participants' discussion board posts revealed that the teachers initially demonstrated a lack of respect for student dialects and limited knowledge of US varieties of Spanish. The course fostered a context that enhanced the teachers' critical language awareness, resulting in a deeper understanding of the inherent nature of language variation and its ties to social, political, and economic power structures.

5. Conclusion

This review underscores the importance of incorporating a critical dimension into the TLA framework of language teachers. As teachers are agents of change

against language complacency and social injustice, developing a strong critical language awareness is essential for fostering positive attitudes toward both their own languages and those of their learners. This is particularly important in plurilingual settings where students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. To enhance TLA research, it is therefore vital to incorporate a critical element into the existing framework, which primarily focuses on cognitive and metacognitive aspects.

Existing research shows that TLA has a significant impact on teacher beliefs and practices. However, the current state of TLA among teachers in various contexts remains unsatisfactory. As a result, a critical research question is how to effectively develop TLA. In response to the increasing plurilingualism worldwide, a substantial body of research has focused on cultivating critical TLA, particularly critical multilingual language awareness. Despite this progress, many proposed approaches remain limited to one-time trials. Thus, there is a pressing need for models that demonstrate strong guiding power and high generalizability. Ducar (2024) recently proposed a framework aimed at transforming world language teacher training by emphasizing translanguaging, transcultural competence, and service learning in teacher preparation programs; however, it still requires empirical validation to establish its effectiveness. Therefore, it is expected that research on the cultivation of TLA will continue to flourish in the coming years.

This review also highlights an emerging area of research: the factors that influence the development of TLA. Understanding the various elements that mediate the growth of TLA is crucial, as it can offer opportunities to better understand the mechanisms behind TLA development and to inform practical strategies for its enhancement in diverse educational settings. These factors may include personal, institutional, and contextual variables that shape how teachers engage with language awareness. However, studies addressing this topic remain relatively scarce, at least in the literature we reviewed. As a result, exploring these factors presents a promising avenue for future research.

Another noteworthy observation is that there is considerable emphasis on pre-service teachers' TLA, while research focusing on in-service teachers' TLA is relatively scarce. In-service teachers play a critical role in education, as they are already practicing professionals and may serve as mentors for prospective teachers. Howerton-Fox et al. (2023), for example, proposed the profiles of effective teachers as resources for cultivating TLA among future educators. Consequently, the development of TLA in in-service teachers warrants greater scholarly attention.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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