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Metalinguistic awareness: a crucial factor of language learning and teaching

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Introduction

Language awareness is a broadly used term in the literature. First of all, it is used in its socio-cultural dimension as an awakening of students for cultural and linguistic pluralism. At the same time language awareness is viewed in its cognitive dimension as a component part of language learning and teaching, where consciousness should be raised for the language elements to be learnt. In the field of language learning and teaching, literature about a metacognitive aspect of language awareness has been developed and in this case the term is synonymous with metalinguistic awareness. In this chapter we are particularly interested in this dimension of language awareness and the realization it takes as a universal ability, transferable across languages. In parallel, the different types it has in terms of the particular unit of linguistic structure that one is reflecting on and on its relation to reading comprehension and writing are discussed. Therefore, in the first part of the paper (section 2) language awareness in general and metalinguistic awareness in particular are discussed and clarified.

In the second part of the paper (section 3), an example of educational intervention is designed for the purpose of raising young students' metalinguistic awareness. The intervention aims at developing students' metalinguistic strategies as part of their metacognitive strategies. Developing metalinguistic strategies to students may take different forms and many different activities may serve to that aim depending on the age of the students, the educational setting, etc. The intervention in question serves the aim of developing metalinguistic awareness in relation to vocabulary and language skills.

Language Awareness and Metalinguistic Awareness: Theoretical Matters

Language awareness is a broadly used term, particularly when it comes to the discussion about the correlation between language and (meta)cognition. Despite its broad use, however, the content given to the term differs.

Language Awareness and Metalinguistic Awareness: Definition(s), Discussion on the Concept

The first serious discussions and analyses of language awareness emerged during the 70's and the 80's with the broader pedagogical movement of Language Awareness, as it was introduced by James (1999). Today various forms of the movement can be traced down which will be further discussed.

One form of the movement concerns language awareness as a sensitivity to different languages and diversity. This attitude towards languages is in line with the social dimension of language awareness, as stated by Chatzidaki (2020), which emphasizes on the awakening of all students towards cultural and linguistic pluralism in order to reform society not only ideologically, but also in terms of social action, in that case, the main goal of language awareness is to treat the linguistic background of the students as equal to the official language of the school with respect over their academic and social development (Chatzidaki, 2020) In this manner, students are able to develop positive views regarding other languages and cultures and to develop the desire to learn other languages, not only the prestigious ones (Candelier, 1998; Chatzidaki et al., 2021) As a consequence of that, in a multicultural and multilingual society different languages and varieties are seen as a repertoire rather than a number of language sets. In the language classroom, this kind of sociocultural and linguistic awareness is seen as facilitating language learning (Svalberg, 2007).

With regard to the other form of the movement, language awareness is viewed as a component part of language learning and teaching (Svalberg, 2007). In this case, two types of language awareness are distinguished: one for cognitive aspects of learning and one for metacognitive aspects of learning. Concerning the first type, it approaches language in terms of cognition. This becomes apparent if we take into account the fact that it includes conscious thinking about and reflecting on language (James, 1999). This knowledge about language is regarded as intuitive and implicit, over which the learner possesses a certain degree of control and it can turn into explicit through the appropriate instruction, provided that the learner's

attention is focused on what they already know (Read, 1978; James, 1999). Moreover, in the literature of Second Language Acquisition, awareness is a synonymous term for consciousness. Explicit learning requires consciousness raising which is facilitated through frequency of encounter with items, through perceptual saliency of items, through strategies that structure learners' attention, etc. (Saville-Troike, 2006). Consciousness raising is involved in linguistic and metalinguistic activities which allow the students to think about and use language consciously (Nagy, 2007; D' Angelo & Sorace, 2022.

As far as metacognitive aspects of learning are concerned, language awareness is considerably similar to the term metalinguistic awareness, which is a skill developing in second and first language learning and teaching. To that end, students should develop metacognitive and metalinguistic skills which facilitate language learning and language literacy in general. Metalinguistic awareness is a conceptually complex term frequently used in the literature, however a generally accepted definition of it is lacking. Although differences of opinion still exist, there appears to be some agreement that metalinguistic awareness refers to the learner's ability not only to perform and communicate in language but also to reflect on and manipulate its use, its structural features and functions consciously (Boers, 2000; Nagy, 2007; Gass & Selinker, 2008; D' Angelo & Sorace, 2022). That is to say, it signals the metacognitive turn of language awareness. Language therefore needs to be viewed as an external structure which is located outside the subject, i.e. the learner (Mertz & Yovel, 2009). This clearly contrasts with the aforementioned cognitive aspects of learning, which according to Tomlinson (1994: 23) view language as "something dynamic and intuitive" that the learner develops internally.

Metalinguistic awareness entails directing attention to language itself, not to the message conveyed through language, as happens in ordinary language use. Properties of the language become explicit whereas in ordinary language use they are left implicit (Kuo & Anderson, 2008). For example, it provides the basis for separating meaning and forms, discriminating language components and understanding the use of grammatical forms and structures (D' Angelo & Sorace, 2022). Additionally, it allows reasoning and application of logic with language; it leads to greater ability regarding discovering connotations from paralinguistic clues and understanding ambiguities of language, as in the case of interpreting and producing riddles as actualizations of polysemy (Zipke, 2008; Ter Kuile et al., 2011).

In general, metalinguistic awareness refers to the understanding that language is a system of communication bound to rules and forms the basis for the ability to discuss different ways to use language. (Ter Kuile et al., 2011). It is argued that it forms a subset of metacognition that involves language structure in some way (Nagy, 2007). This language structure is metacognitively mirrored in the fact that the newly acquired, implicit and intuitive knowledge is objectified through self-reflection, as it is connected to language which is now seen as an object, distant from the learner (Benveniste, 1974; James, 1999)

Students in a classroom setting often spend time on metalinguistic activities, i.e. translating words, memorizing vocabulary, studying rules of grammar or engaging in text-talk (El Euch & Huot, 2015). In earlier classroom methodologies, metalinguistic activities were dominant, making learners aware of the language at the expense of spending time on practice activities. In recent years, however, literature has emerged that offers new ways of increasing metalinguistic awareness of the students, which fall under a more metacognitive approach that aims at a rather metacognitive study of language than a behaviorist anachronism (James, 1999). A typical example of this is negotiation of meaning which makes students aware of their errors in their speech and ultimately leads to increased knowledge of the second language (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Metalinguistic Awareness in Second or Additional Language(s) Learning /Across Languages: Developing a Transferable Ability

From the discussion so far, it is evident that metalinguistic awareness is a skill developing into ability. It is a key factor in learning and teaching for bilingual and monolingual learners as well. Much of the current literature on metalinguistic awareness pays particular attention on the development of a transferable ability regarding second language learners who utilize knowledge and experience gained from one language in the learning of another language (Kuo & Anderson, 2008). It is widely accepted that bilinguals have better metalinguistic skills than monolinguals (Bialystok, 2001; Ter Kuile et al. 2011; De Bot & Jaensch, 2015). Additionally, it is argued that bilinguals are better language learners; bilingualism enhances the development of metalinguistic awareness and communicative skills in general. This seems to be directly affected by the context of acquisition of the second language, i.e, instructed environment compared to natural setting (Ter Kuile et al. 2011).

. Research has shown that there are aspects of language proficiency that are common between the first and second language and thus may be transferable: phonological awareness,

morphosyntactic awareness, word reading, reading comprehension in relation to reading strategies (Kuo & Anderson, 2008; D'Angelo & Sorace, 2022).

The language skills developed in a second language in a more abstract level will be transferred to the third language as well. D' Angelo and Sorace (2022) have tested the additive effect of metalinguistic awareness in third or additional language acquisition. Their study has shown that bilinguals with higher levels of metalinguistic awareness also perform better in third languages acquisition. Furthermore, the importance of explicitness in this awareness, for example, learners' ability not only to perceive the grammatical anomaly but also to provide an explanation for it, is stressed. This kind of explicitness plays several different roles and proves to be beneficial for bilinguals' better performance in additional languages, which has been supported by several studies (Cenoz, 2003; D' Angelo, 2020).

Taken as a fact that bilingual education increases metalinguistic awareness, Ter Kuile et al. (2011) have investigated whether the increased metalinguistic awareness of bilinguals is related to an increased ability to understand an unknown language. Their findings indicate that bilingual education increases metalinguistic awareness and therefore the ability to understand an unknown language. Their study suggests that bilinguals have a better ability compared to monolinguals when it comes to understanding an unknown language, by virtue of their greater metalinguistic awareness. Additionally, their language skills in the second and in the first language are improved. Bilingual education therefore seems to give students an extra advantage in addition to being fluent in two languages (D' Angelo, 2020; D' Angelo & Sorace, 2022).

Therefore, bilingualism appears to heighten aspects of metalinguistic awareness which most probably leads to more efficient linguistic performance (Kuo & Anderson, 2008). The discussion indicates that this ability may rather be universal than language specific (Kuo& Anderson, 2008). Once learners have begun to develop metalinguistic awareness, it is transferable to the rest of their language repertoire (D' Angelo & Sorace, 2022). This is related to the level of metalinguistic awareness seen as the analytic ability to manipulate, analyse and think about language(s) as an abstract object. Furthermore, the more languages one is fluent in, the better a person's metalinguistic awareness at an abstract level and therefore the greater their understanding of an unknown language. It seems that this skill develops into ability as the number of the languages in which the learner is exposed increases.

This lends further support to the argument that learners should be stimulated in the process of conscious reflection on and manipulation of the language systems and the learning strategies developed in previously learned languages (D' Angelo & Sorace, 2022). On account of this, raising students' metalinguistic awareness is a significant part of language education. A necessary precondition for awareness though, is the acquisition of metalinguistic knowledge on the part of the students, which means acquiring explicit knowledge about language.

Language Learning and Different Types of Metalinguistic Awareness

Metalinguistic awareness is divided into a variety of subcategories (Gombert, 1992; Nagy, 2007). Each subcategory is defined in terms of the particular units of linguistic structure that one is reflecting on or manipulating. These types of metalinguistic awareness can be listed as follows:

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness refers to the ability to reflect upon and manipulate the phonological units of a language (Porpodas, 2002). A phonologically aware learner is able to comprehend that words have an internal phonological structure, i.e. they consist of phonemes and syllables. Such an attention requires metalinguistic skill (Snowling et al., 1994). Due to the aforementioned claim that phonological awareness may be a transferable ability between one's first and second language (Kuo & Anderson, 2008; D' Angelo & Sorace, 2022), the need to foster this type of metalinguistic awareness becomes apparent. Thus, concerning first language reading, skills needed for decoding and mapping between phonemes and graphemes are involved and for that reason, such kind of awareness is considered to be of great significance for school achievement. A lot of work has been conducted with children learning to read an alphabetic script, where grapho-phonological awareness, i.e. how orthography encodes phonological information, is discussed (for relevant literature, see Kuo & Anderson, 2008). As far as second language reading research is concerned, bilingual children demonstrate increased phonological awareness for their second and first language compared to monolinguals (for relevant literature, see Kuo & Anderson, 2008).

Morphological Awareness

Morphological awareness refers to the ability to reflect upon and manipulate morphemes, i.e. phonological units with semantic information (Carlisle, 2000). Morphemes are the units of word formation processes. Inflectional morphemes carry grammatical properties, such as tense, aspect, mood, voice (for verbs), gender, case and number (for nouns). Derivational and compounding morphemes contribute to the formation of new words in a language.

Awareness of word formation processes, inflection, derivation and compounding, is connected with learning to read in first and second language. Grapho-morphological awareness may play an important role in breaking orthographic sequences into morphemes. Morphological awareness as the ability to parse words and analyse constituent morphemes for the purpose of constructing the meaning of familiar and unfamiliar words contributes to reading comprehension as well (Carlisle, 2000). Additionally, morphological awareness is connected with vocabulary growth as long as it enhances the acquisition of morphologically complex words (Carlisle, 2000; Kuo & Anderson, 2008).

Syntactic Awareness

Syntactic awareness refers to the understanding and realization of how words are put together into phrases in order to form sentences. Several systematic studies regarding syntactic awareness have demonstrated that it contributes to reading comprehension (Nagy, 2007; Kuo & Anderson, 2008). Competent readers have higher levels of syntactic awareness than poor readers (see Nagy, 2007; Chung et al., 2013; Brimo et al., 2017; Siu & Ho, 2020 for relevant literature). It should be mentioned though that the effect of syntactic awareness may emerge later in reading comprehension as long as the biggest challenge for beginning readers is the mapping between graphemes and phonemes (Kuo & Anderson, 2008). However, even advanced second language learners may fail to make effective use of context in figuring out the meaning of an unknown word, because they have failed to use information provided by the syntactic structure of a sentence (Nagy, 2007).

Metalinguistic Aspects of Vocabulary Learning

It is true that vocabulary learning in some respects can be a very metalinguistically demanding task, as long as students quite often are required to think about words and their meanings in abstract ways (Nagy, 2005). Word consciousness in vocabulary learning includes an interest in and awareness of various aspects of words: their meanings, their histories, relationships with other words, word parts and the way writers use words

effectively to communicate (Nagy, 2005: 30). Word consciousness involves, among others, several types of metalinguistic awareness, for example, sensitivity to syntax, i.e. syntactic awareness, or awareness of word parts, i.e. awareness on morphosemantic issues, as discussed earlier (Stahl & Nagy, 2006; Scott & Nagy, 2009).

Additionally, understanding dictionary definitions of words is a metalinguistically demanding task in vocabulary instruction. Previous research has stressed that quite often students mistake the syntax of a definition and misinterpret the meaning of the word (Nesi & Meara, 1994; Scott & Nagy, 1997; Scott et al., 2008; Chen & Liu, 2022). Therefore, giving more attention to the metalinguistic demands of vocabulary instruction is required as long as vocabulary assists reading comprehension, as will be discussed later.

Metaphorical Awareness: Awareness of the Motivation of Figurative Language

From an applied cognitive linguistics perspective, language awareness involves consciousness raising in terms of making the learner aware of the semantic impact of linguistic units, especially, metaphors, idioms and formulaic sequences (Pütz, 2010). Metaphor awareness develops by drawing students' attention to the literal sense of the figurative expressions, i.e., to make them realize the motivation of the extension of their meaning. Enhanced metaphorical awareness on the part of the learner based on underlying metaphorical themes helps the language learners comprehend and retain unfamiliar figurative expressions in a second language (Boers, 2000; Skoufaki, 2008). In the same line, research has shown that cross-linguistic awareness raising activities encourages reflections on metaphor and helps learners to understand and produce metaphors in the second language (Deignan et al., 1997; Lucas & Yiakoumetti, 2019).

Metalinguistic Awareness and Language Skills

Metalinguistic awareness connects mostly with the development of language skills. Svalberg (2007) notices though that little research is done for its role on listening and speaking compared to the research on reading and writing (for relevant literature, see Carlisle, 1995; Demont & Gobert, 1996; Flood et al, 2002; Nagy, 2007).

Metalinguistic Awareness and Reading Comprehension

It is beyond doubt that phonological awareness may help in successful word decoding. However phonological awareness alone does not guarantee access to meaning and text comprehension. It is important to note that part of becoming literate involves understanding and reflecting on how text conveys meaning, because research has correlated poor comprehension with low sensitivity to word and text meaning (for related literature, see Yuill, 2007).

In addition, reading comprehension can be a metalinguistically demanding task due to the decontextualized character of the written language. As Nagy (2005, p. 33) stresses: "When comprehension breaks down, we must be able to reflect on the language of the text if we want to make sense of it". Vocabulary of the text plays a crucial role in reading comprehension according to Nagy (2005, 2007). Therefore, integrating vocabulary learning strategies-use of context clues, giving more user-friendly definitions of word meanings, talking about words as a part of comprehension strategies increases the metalinguistic abilities that contribute to both vocabulary learning and to reading comprehension (Nagy, 2007).

In addition, the study of Carlisle (2000) has investigated whether morphological awareness is related to reading achievement. One question of the study was whether morphological analysis was related to the reading of derived words. The other was whether morphological awareness (relation between form and meaning) and the reading of derived words contribute to reading comprehension. The results of the study showed that awareness of structure and meaning and the ability to read derived words contributed significantly to comprehension at the word and text levels. These findings are further supported by more recent studies (Lam et al., 2012; Metsala et al., 2019). The findings indicate that morphological awareness connects significantly with syntactic awareness, as well as with awareness that goes beyond the word unit and concerns the text as a whole.

Metalinguistic Awareness and Writing

The metalinguistic demands of writing were first discussed by Gombert (1992). Writing process demands constant (conscious) monitoring by the subject. For attaining better writing of texts in writing instruction, a genre-based approach is generally proposed in literacy's pedagogy. Raising awareness of genre helps learners to produce convention-based texts (Svalberg, 2007). Working on designing and writing whole texts in school or in academic settings allows consciousness raising on a number of issues concerning the discourse, syntax, lexis, etc. This kind of metatextual awareness is highlighted in national curricula for primary

education (see, for example, the present and the past two Curricula for The Greek Language in Primary school whose main goals include the comprehension and production of socially situated texts).

Metalinguistic Awareness and Education: Towards a Metalinguistic Intervention

Regarding education, metalinguistic awareness plays a pivotal role not only in school achievement in various subjects, but also in the formation of the learner's understanding of language's pragmatic function, i.e., how language is used in various contexts. The following part of this paper moves on to describe in greater detail the notion of metalinguistic strategies as a type of metacognitive strategies by presenting a number of educational activities designed to develop metalinguistic awareness in young learners, inspired by previous research (Deignan et al., 1997; Yuill, 1998; Boers, 2000; Nagy, 2007; Zipke, 2008; El Euch & Huot, 2015; Thomou, 2020; Chatzidaki et al. 2021).

At this point, it should be mentioned that the development of metalinguistic strategies must be in line with the actual purpose of the raising of metalinguistic awareness, which is the development of the learner's language skills, i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Hence, in order for a strategy to be effective, the instructor should take into consideration not only the individual differences of their students, but also their vocabulary knowledge as well as their overall metalinguistic abilities and how they handle them (Nagy, 2007). In this section, we move on to the presentation of a metalinguistic intervention comprised of a set of activities inspired by the aforementioned literature, attempting to shed new light on the issue of metalinguistic teaching. The intervention in question focuses mainly on vocabulary and on raising students' metaphorical awareness.

Activity 1

Targeted Metalinguistic Strategy: Playing with Language

Playing with language isa very useful metalinguistic strategy which connects metalinguistic awareness with metaphorical awareness, as it involves the utilization of figurative language. However, what makes this strategy special is not only its direct relation to metaphorical language and awareness. Playing with language is a highly metalinguistic strategy due to its

figurative nature. The fact that it requires the learner to distance themselves from language and extend the literal meaning of the message brings us to Benveniste's (1974) statement about viewing language as a distant object, separate from our subjective hypostasis before analyse and then control it in order to reach awareness in a (meta)semantic and a (meta)pragmatic level. Thus, the more figurative the nature of a strategy is, the more metalinguistic the strategy gets to be.

A possible application of this strategy is a task where the students are asked to interpret metaphors and explain the reasoning of their interpretations. The examples of table 1 [1] are all translated from Greek and they contain a figurative expression whose interpretation is heavily culture-based.

- This tavern is a drugstore (=very expensive).
- Mary is a seal (=shouts a lot).
- I have a storm inside me (=I am very upset).
- That movie was a punch in the stomach (=touching and painful).
- He always likes to slay the others with the cotton (=insult subtly).

Table 1: Playing with language through an activity of metaphor interpretation

The aim of this is to encourage students to explore, discuss and become aware of the cultural dimensions of metaphor by thinking about metaphors at a conscious level (Deignan et al., 1997). This exercise therefore makes the figurative extension of meaning quite explicit, transforming it into metaphorical awareness. As Deignan et al. (1997) stress, such an approach is intellectually demanding, therefore it requires students to be equipped with the necessary metalanguage and teachers to provide them with the germane experiential motivation behind the metaphors.

Activity 2

Targeted Metalinguistic Strategy: Utilization of the Experiential Motivation

In the same line with Deignan et al. (1997), Boers (2000) refers to the recognition and explanation of a metaphorical theme under which a metaphor is realized, through its

[1] All the examples of the activity are taken from Christodoulakis (2022).

experiential basis. This experiential basis operates as a motivation for the use of the metaphorical theme as it directly connects it to our physical experience. Therefore, this experiential motivation[2] becomes a valuable metalinguistic strategy which aids the learner to enhance their metaphorical awareness as it improves their in-depth comprehension of the linguistic instances of the metaphorical theme (Boers, 2000). In this activity aiming to foster this metalinguistic strategy, the students are originally asked to list the symptoms of fear. Naturally, each symptom fits into a different metaphorical perception of fear as reflected in figurative language: FEAR IS ILLNESS, FEAR IS SUPERNATURAL BEING, FEAR IS BURDEN, FEAR IS A DANGEROUS HUMAN/ANIMAL, etc. (Boers, 2000; Zibin2019). Hereupon, students are asked to subsume the symptoms of fear they have already listed, to the right metaphorical theme (table 2) provided that the teacher has proceeded to explicit instruction concerning the various metaphorical conceptions of fear. As Gibbs (1993) puts it, the "logic" of metaphor can prove beneficial for the student in order to choose the appropriate linguistic instantiation to fit in a given context. Therefore, this activity proves the fact that metaphorical awareness is indeed an indefeasible part of metalinguistic awareness.

Write down as many typical bodily symptoms of FEAR as you can. Then, try to subsume each symptom to the right metaphorical theme about FEAR.	
Symptoms of fear	**Metaphorical themes**
(Cold) sweat	FEAR IS…
Shiver	FEAR IS…
Urination	FEAR IS…
(Physical) weakness	FEAR IS…
Drop in body temperature	FEAR IS…
Fever	FEAR IS…
Tachycardia	FEAR IS…
Hair straightening out	FEAR IS…

[2] For a detailed explanation of experiential motivation, see Boers (2000, p.567) and Kövecses (2010, pp. 205-206).

Dryness in mouth	FEAR IS…

Table 2 : Utilization of the experiential motivation as a metalinguistic strategy for the enhancement of metaphorical awareness (inspired by Zibin, 2019)

In light of the aforementioned cognitive approaches to second language learning and teaching (Deignan et al 1997; Boers, 2000; Beréndi et al., 2008; Skoufaki, 2008), Thomou (2020) has proposed a similar activity which groups figurative idioms along metaphorical themes and learners are asked to find out the metaphorical themes underlying the figurative expressions. For example, figurative idioms expressing the metaphorical theme LIFE IS A GAME/A SPORT are grouped together and discussion and analysis of the literal source of their meaning follows (idioms taken from football, track and field, archery, rowing). According to the relevant literature, raising awareness on the motivation of metaphorical senses via their connection to their literal meaning, i.e., their experiential basis, seems to facilitate idioms' comprehension and retention.

Activity 3

Targeted Metalinguistic Strategy: Teaching Ambiguous Language

The final targeted metalinguistic strategy which is worth developing is teaching ambiguous language. This strategy is closely connected to polysemy, as it has to do with the handling of multiple word meanings and the final selection of a preferred meaning in a specific context (El Euch & Huot, 2015). As Zipke (2008, p. 128) stresses, "understanding that words and sentences can have more than one meaning improves comprehension by allowing readers to think flexibly about the appropriate meaning". In other words, the strategic reader, i.e., the reader who comprehends texts deeply, gradually develops sensitivity to polysemy, i.e., to multiple meanings of words (Stahl & Nagy, 2006, p. 12; Thomou, 2019).

Since the core of this strategy is polysemy in relation to context, it could be used to develop metalinguistic awareness and reading comprehension by the use of riddles and jokes, in which children are enormously interested (Zipke, 2008). The positive effects of ambiguous language (riddles, made up jokes using word compounds, homonyms, communication games etc.) on the development of metalinguistic awareness and reading comprehension are

indisputable (Shade, 1991; Yuill, 1998; Zipke, 2007, 2008). According to Zipke (2008, p. 130), "riddles are the perfect medium for learning how to manipulate language", which is the most significant factor for the development of metalinguistic awareness. As Shade (1991) points out, a joke or a riddle can only be successful when its humor is detected via metalinguistic skills such as understanding of multiple meanings, metaphors and language ambiguity.

Activity 3 , which is presented below, is an example of a possible utilization of teaching ambiguous language through riddles on the purpose of fostering our students' metalinguistic awareness. Before the students are handed over the exercise, we could provide them with a brief oral instruction of what is a riddle and what are its components and then provide them with a list of examples of lexical and structural riddles, which were designed for the purpose of this activity .

Examples (Riddles)
-What makes you mad? -Nouns. -Nouns? -Yes. People, places and things.
-I just saw a wolf on the ship. -Where? -No, the regular kind.
Why did the magazine company go out of business? Too many issues.
(In the psychology course) Professor: Have you heard of Pavlov? Me: It rings a bell.

Table 3 : Lexical riddles

After reading and discussing the meanings of the riddles, the students are asked to suggest a topic in order to write their own riddles under the teacher's guidance. Loosely following the procedures from Bernstein (1979) and Zipke (2008), we could generate a list of words and phrases that are associated with the topic. We can see a concept list for a suggested topic, namely school, which was designed for the purpose of this activity.

Pen	Desk
Notebook	Blackboard
Book	Teacher
Ruler	Classroom

Table 4 : First step of Activity 3: The concept list for the topic: "school"

The next step, as Zipke (2008) mentions, is to check if any of the words are homonyms. Subsequently, we write down every meaning offered.

Book	1) A written or printed work consisted of pages. 2) To make a reservation; buy a ticket in advance.
Notebook	1) A small book with blank or ruled pages for writing notes in. 2) The romantic comedy "Notebook" (2004).
Ruler	1) A straight strip typically marked at regular intervals and used to draw straight lines or measure distances 2) A person exercising government or

	dominion.

Table 5: *Second step of Activity 3: The homonyms and their different meanings*

It is worth mentioning that while the additional meanings are often known to the children, they find difficulty in producing them without prompting (Zipke, 2008). Now that we have our concept list, the homonyms and the different meanings, we are ready to move on to the third step of our activity which is the creation of our own riddles. The children should write a question that seems to be about the first meaning of the word, but it turns out to be about the second meaning, or vice versa:

-Why are you crying so much? Is your homework so frustrating?

- Can't you see? It's the "Notebook"!

The students are prompted to choose one of the homonyms. As Zipke (2008) mentions, question writing is scaffolded with questions about the context in which the word is used. For instance, we could ask the students about what one does with a ruler (measure distances) and if that is the same thing one does with a ruler of a country. Then, we could ask our students to write a question about someone who is measuring a distance or drawing a straight line with a country ruler. If the riddle leads the listener to an incorrect conclusion, then it is a successful riddle, as it reflects the ambiguity of language (Zipke, 2008).

-You have to measure the length of the desk in order to calculate its area.

-Alright… (grabs a picture of Alexander the Great and starts measuring the length)

-What are you doing with Alexander the Great?

-What? I needed a ruler!

Conclusion

Languages do not exist and develop independently of one another. Language components such as phonological awareness or morphological awareness, as well as orthographic knowledge measured in first languages, have been found to impact the target language learning process (Kahn-Horwitz et al., 2014, 2011). . There are numerous activities aiming at enhancing different aspects of students' metalinguistic awareness. Instructors may

develop their own material according to the needs and the language level of their students. Development of metalinguistic awareness in learners benefits them in having control over their metacognitive knowledge and strategies and using them in an effective way in order to enhance, as well as self-monitor their language use and metalinguistic skills in their first and additional languages.

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