



Article

Strengthening Grammar Teaching Through Language Awareness in Pre-Service English Teacher Training

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Abstract: Developing language awareness has been recognized as an important concept in the field of applied linguistics and teacher training in general, especially in terms of grammar teaching. This paper explores the importance of developing language awareness in terms of its application to the grammar domain in PreSETT. Based on insights derived from psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and functional approaches to linguistics, this study discusses the need to develop grammatical awareness in order to improve teacher competence, promote reflective pedagogy, enhance classroom interaction, and ensure an inclusive education system in multilingual communities. Utilizing the qualitative literature review methodology, this paper explores theoretical and empirical studies related to the concept of grammatical awareness and analyzes their implications for the practice of pre-service teachers in PreSETT. The study then points out some difficulties that might hinder the integration of grammatical awareness in pre-service teachers' training process and provides pedagogical suggestions in this regard.

Keywords: Language awareness; grammatical awareness; PreSETT; teacher education; grammar instruction; pedagogical competence; reflective practice; multilingual classrooms; applied linguistics; teacher language awareness.

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1. Introduction

Language forms the core of any form of education since it does not only serve as a subject to learn but also acts as the means through which knowledge is made, shared, and assessed. In this case, grammar constitutes an integral part of language since it provides a systematic structure in which effective communication can be done. The challenge is that despite the crucial role played by grammar, most pre-service teachers view it as a collection of arbitrary and rigid rules.

This challenge is particularly common when it comes to the training of pre-service English teachers. Even as many pre-service teachers show a strong level of implicit knowledge of grammatical rules, they fail to possess the required explicit metalinguistic skills required in teaching grammar successfully [1]. This brings forth the need to develop linguistic awareness among pre-service English teachers in the grammatical aspect.

Language awareness was first proposed by Hawkins to emphasize the need for encouraging students to critically engage with language [2]. Further developing the notion, Andrews proposes the idea of teacher language awareness, which combines linguistic competence and pedagogical skills. The significance of the above idea is confirmed in the subsequent literature, especially in the context of grammar instruction, where both clear explanations and responsiveness to learners' needs play a key role [3].

Thus, this study aims at proving the necessity of developing grammatical awareness for teachers working in PreSETT programs. In order to prove the above statement, the current paper will analyze language awareness theories, explore the connection between language awareness and grammar teaching, and discuss some educational practices associated with this phenomenon [4]. The notion of language awareness has undergone much change over time and today is considered one of the key issues in applied linguistics and teacher training. In general, language awareness can be defined as conscious knowledge of language along with critical reflections on its use [5]. Language awareness covers knowledge of language structures, their functions and variability, and analysis of the way language works in various situations. One of the first researchers who called for such an approach to language learning was Hawkins who initiated the discussion of language awareness in educational practice [6]. Andrews further developed the idea by discussing the issue of teachers' language awareness that involves not only knowledge of language systems but also the ability to use this knowledge in classroom practice [7]. Grammatical awareness belongs to one of the dimensions of language awareness discussed by Andrews and can be characterized as knowing grammatical rules and working with them in practical application. Ellis for instance, identifies explicit knowledge of grammar as a key component in the language learning process since it allows learners to notice and be aware of their language use [8]. In the same vein, Larsen-Freeman considers grammar to be a dynamic process that involves the interconnections between form, meaning, and use [9].

2. Methodology

Findings from research conducted among teachers in training show that many of the teachers-to-be do not have adequate metalinguistic knowledge necessary for effective grammar teaching. This implies that grammatical awareness should be a major concern in the training of teachers. Also, Borg points out that teachers' belief systems play a key role in shaping grammar instruction practice and must therefore be addressed in PreSETT. Awareness of grammatical language can be looked at from various theories.

From psycholinguistic perspective, language awareness promotes cognitive processing because it allows learners to notice patterns, classify information and retrieve information efficiently. Language awareness, specifically metalinguistic awareness, enables people to think about language as an object of thought, which helps them acquire their first or second language.

From sociolinguistic perspective, language cannot be understood outside of its social and cultural context. The choice of grammatical forms cannot be seen as objective because it involves aspects related to the identity and power relations of speakers.

Halliday and Matthiessen's functional linguistic approach offers an excellent explanation of grammar as a tool for making meaning. Grammar is more than just a set of rules; it is a means through which people communicate ideations, interpersonal messages, and textual meanings. This approach is particularly useful in teacher education because it focuses on the communicative and contextual aspects of grammar.

3. Results and Discussion

This research employs a qualitative literature review approach that draws on the most important theoretical and empirical studies that have been done in relation to language awareness and grammar teaching. This includes both old and recent literature in the field, which ensures that there is an extensive and balanced review of the topic. In Uzbekistan, English language and Literature specialties are based on PreSETT curriculum and "Practical Grammar" course is focused on grammar topics in context. This article justifies course curriculum and topics which we have redesigned the materials and included language awareness raising activities that help to improve learners' language

awareness in grammar context [10]. The investigation was held in Jizzakh State Pedagogical University, Navoiy State University, Urgench State Pedagogical Institute and Nukus State Pedagogical Institute with 1 year students of English Language and Literature specialty. Extra manual "Language Awareness in Grammar Context" for the course has been designed and published in accordance with the requirements of syllabus for the course "Practical Grammar" course and activities have been designed focusing on raising language awareness [11]. The manual includes 15 topics as 30 hours have been conducted during first semester for the 1 year students in all high schools in Uzbekistan according to the curriculum. The research experiment has been done during the semester for all four high schools in the form of control and experiment groups. The methodology we have offered, materials we have designed are actively utilized during the lessons in the course "Practical Grammar". The manual shows the difference of teaching grammar traditionally and focusing on language awareness. In this article it is included and analyzed one of the units of the manual and students' results from doing the activities, and understanding of the topics [12].

Topic: Hypothetical Meaning of "Wish"

The verb "wish" is used to talk about situations that are unreal, imaginary, or contrary to fact, and it usually carries an emotional or evaluative meaning.

It can express:

Regret about the past;

Dissatisfaction with the present;

Desire for change in someone else's behavior or in circumstances;

Hypothetical situations those are not true [13].

Forms of "Wish"

The form of "wish" that expresses a hypothetical or unreal situation depends on what time or situation you're talking about.

Wish + Past Simple (Present Hypothetical)	Used for present situations which are unreal.	Subject + wish + past simple	I wish I knew the answer. (I don't know it.) She wishes she were taller. (She isn't.)
Wish + Past Perfect (Past Hypothetical / Regret)	Used for regret about past events	Subject + wish + past perfect	I wish I had studied harder. He wishes he hadn't said that.
Wish + Would (Desire / Annoyance)	Used for changing someone else's behavior or a situation.	Subject + wish + would + base verb	I wish you would listen to me. She wishes it would stop raining.
Wish + Could (Ability / Limitation)	Used to express impossibility or limitation.	Subject + wish + could + base verb	I wish I could speak French. He wishes he could travel more.

Function of “Wish”

The function of “wish” is to express situations that are unreal, hypothetical, or different from reality, often with an emotional or evaluative tone. Specifically, “wish” is used to:

Express regret	About the past: I wish I had studied harder. About the present: I wish I knew the answer.
Express dissatisfaction	With current situations or facts: I wish it were warmer today.
Express desire for change	About someone else’s behavior or a situation: I wish you would listen.
Express hypothetical or unreal situations	Situations that are imagined or contrary to fact: I wish I lived by the sea.

Meaning of “Wish”

The verb “wish” expresses a desire for reality to be different from what it actually is. It often refers to unreal, imaginary, or hypothetical situations [14].

Counterfactual/ Hypothetical Regret	“Wish” describes something that is not true, either now or in the past. It expresses regret about the past.	I wish I were taller. (I am not tall.) I wish I had studied harder. (I didn’t study.)
Dissatisfaction /Desire for Change	It can express a desire for someone’s behavior or a situation to change.	I wish it would stop raining. (I am unhappy about the rain.)
Emotional nuance	Using “wish” often conveys frustration, longing, or disappointment, not just a neutral preference	I wish you would stop interrupting me.



Student Practice

✂ Pre-Activity: Activating Knowledge

Activity 1: Activating Previous Knowledge

Instruction:

1. Look at the pictures and make up sentence using the “wish”.
2. Use the verb form that fits the situation.
3. Identify whether it’s a present unreal, past regret, future/changeable, or general desire.



📺 While-Activity: Noticing and Using Wish in Context

Activity 2: Explaining choices

Instruction:

1. Read the text below carefully and underline the sentences with “wish”.
2. Identify the form, function and meaning of the “wish”

Last summer was unforgettable, but sometimes I can't help thinking about what could have been. I wish I had traveled more before starting university because I missed so many opportunities. My friend Emma always goes on adventures, and I wish I were as brave as her when it comes to trying new things. Lately, the weather has been awful, and I wish it would stop raining so we could enjoy the park. Sometimes I even wish my neighbors wouldn't play music so loudly at night—it's really distracting! Looking ahead, I wish my parents could come visit me more often, but I know they are busy. And every time I see my old schoolmates' posts online, I wish I had stayed in touch with them.

Activity 3: Wish Transformation Challenge

Instruction:

1. Read each sentence carefully. Identify if it refers to: past regret, present/future unreal, desire for change in someone else / future
2. Transform the sentence into a sentence with wish, using the correct tense.
3. Check the meaning: does it express regret, hypothetical desire, or complaint/hope for change?

1. I didn't prepare enough for final exam.
2. The university keeps changing deadlines.
3. I can't understand some advanced theory in the course.
4. The lecturer doesn't respond quickly to emails.
5. We didn't submit our group project on time.
6. My group members didn't contribute equally.
7. I have too many assignments this semester.
8. I didn't attend the revision classes.
9. I procrastinated instead of studying.
10. The course schedule is too demanding.

► Post-Activity: Production and Reflection

Activity 4: Wish Diary Reflection

Instruction

1. Think about the situations where you feel regret, annoyance, or desire for change and write a short paragraph including 5-6-sentences using “wish”
2. Share your diary with your partner.
3. Read the paragraph and identify the form, function and meaning of “wish”.
4. Discuss in peer.

The experimental study was carried out in three stages: preparatory, main, and final. During the preparatory stage, a survey was administered among students in order to identify their communicative difficulties, initial level of knowledge, and ability to apply a foreign language in practice [15]. In addition, approaches to developing students' language awareness, as well as relevant practical tasks and methodological recommendations, were

examined and discussed. This stage provided a foundation for the effective organization of the experimental work and ensured readiness for the practical implementation of the proposed methodology. Within the experimental process, indicators related to the development of language awareness in prospective English language teachers were assessed on the basis of empirical methods. Questionnaire-based tasks were employed, and the resulting data were systematically analyzed. Final conclusions were drawn through a comparative analysis of the achievement levels demonstrated by students in the experimental and control groups according to the established criteria.

At the main stage, participants were divided into experimental and control groups. Instruction in the experimental group was conducted in accordance with the methodology developed by the researcher, whereas the control group was taught using traditional instructional approaches. This phase enabled students to apply their language skills in practical contexts, and positive outcomes were observed through tasks specifically designed to enhance language awareness. Practical grammar instruction occupied a central role, facilitating the application of grammatical rules within communicative contexts.

During the final stage, the results obtained from the experimental and control groups were subjected to comprehensive analysis. The findings indicated that the implementation of the proposed methodology contributed significantly to the enhancement of language awareness among students in the experimental group. In comparison with the control group, the experimental group demonstrated markedly improved outcomes, thereby confirming the effectiveness and practical applicability of the methodology. Furthermore, students' self-assessments, together with observational data collected in collaboration with instructors, revealed positive dynamics in the development of language skills achieved through the application of the methodology.

Throughout the experimental process, the tasks designed on the basis of the proposed methodology facilitated the practical application of grammatical rules, the expansion of vocabulary, and the development of communicative competence. Moreover, the exercises aimed at fostering language awareness increased students' motivation to engage with practical grammar and encouraged them to articulate their ideas more clearly and accurately.

The overall results demonstrate that the application of effective methods for developing language awareness within practical grammar instruction significantly enhances the level of language awareness among prospective foreign language teachers. The superior performance of the experimental group in comparison with the control group provides empirical evidence of the methodology's effectiveness. Consequently, the proposed methodology may be recommended for improving students' language awareness, strengthening their communicative competence, and optimizing the organization of the educational process.

The above discussion highlights the importance of grammatical awareness for pre-service teacher education, since its impact on such training is multi-faceted. First of all, grammatical awareness contributes substantially to the competence of pre-service teachers. Those who have explicit knowledge about grammar will be able to make explanations more clearly and effectively plan their lessons. This feature is especially crucial in grammar instruction, when the learner needs to receive detailed information about linguistic issues. Secondly, grammatical awareness promotes reflection among teachers in terms of analyzing and assessing their language use. This will help them improve the way in which they teach their learners. Thirdly, grammatical awareness facilitates classroom interaction. Pre-service teachers, who know how grammar works, will be able to modify their language according to learners' language proficiency level. Last but not least, grammatical awareness is essential in multilingual classrooms. Understanding the differences between languages enables teachers to predict difficulties that arise in the

learning process and help learners overcome them. This leads to the development of more inclusive pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, grammatical awareness allows for the bridging of the theory-practice gap. Putting theory into practice allows pre-service teachers to get a more integral understanding of grammar instruction. Although the advantages of grammatical awareness in PreSETT are evident, this approach faces some obstacles. First, most training programs focus little on the study of linguistics. Another obstacle is the existing experience that pre-service teachers gain while studying at school.

4. Conclusion

To overcome these problems, teacher training needs to take a more holistic perspective into consideration. It entails incorporating the aspects of teaching the rules of grammar through communicative activities, encouraging reflective learning, as well as offering the opportunity for practical experience by means of microteaching and classroom observation. Technology can be another effective tool to facilitate teachers' grammatical awareness. With the help of such technological instruments as videos, for instance, teachers will have an opportunity to evaluate their own performance in terms of language use and engage in reflective interaction with peers. Assessment strategies also should be developed to account for grammatical awareness.

Development of language awareness in the grammatical area is an important aspect of teacher training. First, this kind of approach helps in building professional competence as well as reflective skills among pre-service teachers. Furthermore, development of grammatical awareness improves classroom interactions and encourages pre-service teachers to employ inclusive approaches to teaching. Significantly, this kind of strategy helps pre-service teachers to overcome one of the biggest challenges in teacher training programs – that is bridging the gap between theory and practice. In this respect, grammatical awareness cannot be viewed just as a side aspect but rather as a core element that should be incorporated into Pre-Service English Teacher Training Program (PreSETT).

Moreover, the development of language awareness helps teachers achieve greater professional autonomy by enabling them to make appropriate teaching decisions, modify teaching materials according to learner requirements, and assess their teaching techniques objectively. This also resonates with the current trends in education that focus on learner-based instruction, communicative competence, and language awareness within context. Hence, it can be asserted that the incorporation of language awareness development into the training process of teachers is not just important; rather, it is essential. It is because, through such an approach, we can develop competent and responsive teachers for the current world with its linguistic and cultural diversity.

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