

Transcription: What is Language Awareness?

Simon Armitage

Geography teacher

So, we communicate with our students, and it stands to reason that our students communicate with us, and they do that in a range of different ways, in conversation, in written form, in dialogue with each other, that we may hear as teachers, of course, during the course of the lesson. It stands to reason that, in this communication, language is the key element, so being language aware, aware of how the students are using their language in the class, and we as teachers are using our language to them, is going to be very high up, or should be very high up on our priorities.

So, I think, one interesting area is considering the difference between conversational language, and academic language. And, of course, students coming into our classrooms, probably conversing as they come through the door, are going to be much more naturally inclined to express themselves conversationally, than in an academic style or using academic language. Now, this obviously has a major implication for how students approach examination writing, but it also helps them to be able to understand how to do this, to express their ideas academically, to be concise and precise during any classroom. And, this bridge between conversational and academic styles of communication, of language, is something that needs to be taught.

Ursula Woodhouse

Business Studies teacher

I think language awareness, it's the understanding of the fact that, when we teach learners, whose first language is not English, we need to be aware of the fact that they may have different needs from those taught in their first language. Therefore, language awareness is, kind of, sensitivity to those needs, and ability to accommodate those needs in our teaching and planning.

When discussing language awareness, we need to understand that English becomes the medium and the vehicle for delivery of the subject message. And, therefore, if learners are not aware, or are not confident using the medium, they may not achieve very well, they may be demotivated, and therefore lose interest in the subject.

Esther Guterrez Eugenio

Language Expert at Cambridge English

I think that's it's important that teachers are language aware, because that is going to make them become better language users in the classroom. It's going to help them understand better how the language they are using, is having an impact on their student's understanding of the content. It's going to help them also target their language use better to what their students' abilities are, and it's eventually going to make the students better learners.

The importance of teachers being language aware, is not just for the teachers themselves, but also has a great impact on their students. Students who are more language aware, and who are more able to use language appropriately, are more able to communicate effectively. And also, they are more able to understand how, sometimes, issues with the content are not just issues technically with the content, but rather with the language that the content comes with.