

AWAKENING TO LANGUAGES IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

In the context of plurilingual and intercultural education, the Awakening to Languages (AtL) approach has been a focus on language education due to its potential to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills towards linguistic and cultural diversity. Consequently, a literature review was carried out to: i) understand how this approach has been (re)constructed over the years; ii) identify the predominant authors cited by the articles; iii) and collect suggestions of didactic activities following this approach. Searches were developed in four databases, namely: Scopus, ERIC, Taylor & Francis, and Web of Science. These searches led to a corpus of 14 articles which was subjected to categorical qualitative analysis. The results indicate that the approach is seen as a way to reconstruct knowledge about languages and, although activities are presented, it seems necessary to invest in ways to enable its replication in educational contexts.

KEY WORDS

awakening to languages; pluralistic didactic approach; language awareness; educational contexts; literature review.



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**AWAKENING TO LANGUAGES EM CONTEXTOS EDUCATIVOS:
UMA REVISÃO DA LITERATURA**

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RESUMO

No contexto da educação plurilíngue e intercultural, a abordagem Awakening to Languages (AtL) tem sido um foco no ensino de línguas devido ao seu potencial para desenvolver conhecimentos, atitudes e habilidades em relação à diversidade linguística e cultural. Nesse contexto, foi realizada uma revisão de literatura com os seguintes objetivos: i) compreender como essa abordagem tem sido (re)construída ao longo dos anos; ii) identificar os autores mais citados nos artigos analisados; iii) e reunir propostas de atividades didáticas alinhadas à abordagem AtL. As pesquisas foram realizadas em quatro bases de dados — Scopus, ERIC, Taylor & Francis e Web of Science — o que resultou num corpus de 14 artigos, que foram submetidos a análise qualitativa categorial. Os resultados indicam que a abordagem é vista como uma forma de reconstruir conhecimento sobre as línguas e, embora sejam apresentadas atividades, parece necessário investir em modos de possibilitar a sua replicação em contextos educativos.

PALAVRAS - CHAVE

awakening to languages; abordagem didática plural; language awareness; contextos educativos; revisão de literatura.



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RESUMEN

En el ámbito de la educación plurilingüe e intercultural, el enfoque Awakening to Languages (AtL) ha sido destacado en la enseñanza de lenguas por su potencial para desarrollar conocimientos, actitudes y habilidades relacionadas con la diversidad lingüística y cultural. Así, se realizó una revisión de la literatura con tres objetivos: i) comprender cómo se ha (re)construido este enfoque a lo largo del tiempo; ii) identificar los autores más citados en los artículos; y iii) recopilar propuestas de actividades didácticas acordes con el enfoque AtL. La investigación se llevó a cabo en cuatro bases de datos —Scopus, ERIC, Taylor & Francis y Web of Science—, conformando un corpus de 14 artículos sometidos a un análisis cualitativo categorial. Los resultados indican que el enfoque se considera una forma de reconstruir el conocimiento sobre las lenguas y que, aunque se presentan actividades, es necesario invertir en estrategias que permitan su replicación en contextos educativos diversos.

PALABRAS CLAVE

awakening to languages; enfoque didáctico plural; language awareness; contextos educativos; revisión de literatura.



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Awakening to Languages in Educational Contexts: A Literature Review

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INTRODUCTION

In a world shaped by fragmentation and full of misunderstandings concerning what is seen as different, pluralistic approaches such as the Awakening to Languages (AtL) approach emerge as a paradigm shift in language education by assuming diversity as an impetus for action towards knowledge, acceptance, and effective change in schools (Candelier, 2009; De Pietro & Matthey, 2001; Silva & Lourenço, 2023). Although this approach has been conceived and implemented for many years in the educational field, there still appear to be few recent studies dedicated to mapping the understanding of the approach throughout the years or focused on bringing together the didactic proposals suggested by the studies on AtL. Considering this and the importance of the approach in the context of plurilingual and intercultural education, a literature review was carried out focusing on the analysis of 14 published articles of the second decade of the 21st century about research on AtL conducted in different geographical contexts. This literature review was guided by the aims of understanding how the approach has been (re)constructed over the years, identifying which relevant authors have been considered by the articles and also finding which didactic activities are presented as suggestions for interventions following this approach. The present paper is divided into four sections (in the addition to the introduction), namely: i) theoretical framework; ii) method; iii) findings and discussion; and iv) conclusion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

LANGUAGE AWARENESS

The final decades of the last century marked the emergence of the reflection on language learning by several academics, such as Ronald Carter, Peter Doughty, M. A. K. Halliday, Eric Hawkins, Katharine Perera, Anne Sinclair and Tony Tinkel (Donmall-Hicks, 1997), among others. These studies came aligned with the Bullock Report of 1975 that brought to light the illiteracy of students in British schools and their difficulties in learning languages due to their lack of metalinguistic skills. Also, it highlighted the challenges in the integration of individuals with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, coming from other countries as a result of migratory movements (Svalberg, 2016; Tammenga-Helmantel et al., 2022). The reflection around this topic was also marked by some landmarks, such as the rise of a movement in Great Britain called Language Awareness

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(LA), theorized by Eric Hawkins as a possible solution to the problems previously mentioned (Cots & Garrett, 2017; Dimova, 2020; Wu, 2025). In Hawkins' words, this movement would fill a "missing link" in language learning in terms of practices and ideologies regarding how languages should be learnt (Hawkins, 1999).

According to the Association of Language Awareness, LA can be defined as "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use", thus focusing on three main domains: language, language learning and language teaching (Chik & Melo-Pfeifer, 2020). LA, which can be considered a process, a product, or both (Svalberg, 2012), was promoted by Eric Hawkins, considered the father of the movement, who defended the need for a New Approach to the School Language Apprenticeship (Hawkins, 1999). This movement discussed the potential of an integrative discipline on language education, aimed at reflecting on and about languages – not only some languages, but all of them – implying a holistic comprehension of its characteristics and patterns, as a part of the curriculum and as a component of citizenship education (Cots & Garrett, 2017; Kelly, 2019). This would regard the problematization of contemporary issues and the development of "values, knowledge and skills" (Cots & Garrett, 2017, p. 6) that are considered relevant to the formation of citizens more aware and critical of the world they live in and engaged with it (Gaspar & van der Worp, 2026; Özkaynak & Sayer, 2026; Roothoof & Bueno-Alastuey, 2025; Saeli et al., 2025).

Thus, the main aims of the movement can be defined as the following: i) shifting the paradigm of language learning, from a proficiency-only paradigm restricted to isolated subjects with no links to other fields of the curriculum (European Commission, 2018), towards a more "cross-curricular, holistic and inclusive approach to language education" (Sierens et al., 2018, p. 21) in which teachers have a crucial role in making students the central players (van den Broek, 2020); ii) promoting openness to languages and cultures (Chik & Melo-Pfeifer, 2020); iii) integrating immigrants, their languages and cultures; iv) improving proficiency of second languages at schools (Kelly, 2019); v) and providing of the necessary bases for language use and functionality (Dubiner, 2018). Deepening the knowledge and the reflection about languages would allow individuals to have more space to say what they want and could boost the development of autonomy and problem-solving skills, as well as communicative and metalinguistic competences (Chik & Melo-Pfeifer, 2020; Dubiner, 2018; Ghanmi & Navracscics, 2025; Hawkins, 1996). Therefore, LA would consist of a form of combating linguistic parochialism by defending a different – transversal and holistic – way of understanding and working with the languages and cultures of the world in educational contexts, through the joint work of teachers for an understanding of languages and of ways of working with them (Hawkins, 1996, 1999).

To accomplish these aims, it would be necessary to create bridges between individuals' mother tongue and foreign languages, teachers of different subjects, the school and the community, and between students with different linguistic-communicative repertoires, linguistic-cultural paths, and experiences (Hawkins, 1996). Thus, the conceptualization of LA would include deepening the knowledge of the mother tongue through an effective introduction of awareness in the curriculum (involving parents, investing in teacher education, and following a logic of prolonged awareness throughout schooling). The aim would be the promotion of interest, curiosity and acceptance towards diversity regarding the development of capacities to critically think about languages, to analyse, compare and understand languages while fostering the ability to construct semiotic resources to language speakers (Chik & Melo-Pfeifer, 2020). Moreover, LA includes the education of the ear for different phonetics of languages that individuals do not usually hear and that are different from their repertoires, the *overture*



aux langues (francophone term) or awakening to languages (anglophone term) and development of learning skills on different ways of learning foreign languages (Hawkins, 1999). Throughout these processes, reflection is a fundamental element that goes hand by hand with LA (Dubiner, 2018; Svalberg, 2012).

In recent years, LA has been developing connections with different contemporary aspects that are being problematised to address the needs and worries of the society, namely considering Artificial Intelligence and the way it can promote awareness during the process of learning and contacting with languages (Yang et al., 2024), critical multilingual LA related to the processes of decolonizing language education (Meighan, 2025) and the promotion of social activism in language learning (Fourcade, 2021). Nevertheless, the way in which LA developed to address the digital and social realities of the last years may lead to a trajectory of LA with some risks related to becoming so broad that it may lose its conceptual “anchor,” potentially diluting its practical utility for teachers who still need concrete strategies to navigate between language acquisition and linguistic reflection (Darics et al., 2025; Wang & Liu, 2024). As a matter of fact, this is something worth to problematise in the field, since the practice of LA in educational contexts is considered as not being consensual due to the existence of different theories of language acquisition, approaches and aims among teachers, subjects and researchers on language education that led to tensions and divergences (Kelly, 2019). Moreover, the movement is also criticized precisely due to the lack of focus on teacher education to promote language awareness in educational contexts (Ducar, 2022), which led to an evolution of the movement towards critical language awareness (Byram, 2012; Huang & Guo, 2024) and teacher language awareness (Dubiner, 2018).

AWAKENING TO LANGUAGES

Hawkin’s theory on LA laid the foundations to the AtL approach as defined in the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA) (Candelier et al., 2012). This approach was also strongly influenced by a paradigm shift initiated by the European Commission, in 1995, in a publication where it was argued that language learning should transcend mere economic and professional motivations (Comissão Europeia, 1995). Instead, the belief was that it should align with the values of European integration, fostering a shared identity across languages and cultures. Following these guidelines, two projects were developed within the AtL framework to mature the approach: EVLANG (1997–2001), which focused on introducing new languages and deconstructing linguistic prejudice; and JAILING (2000–2003), which expanded the scope to more countries and reframed diversity as a positive and fundamental value.

AtL is one of the pluralistic didactic approaches presented in FREPA, a framework that encompasses didactic approaches designed to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity in educational contexts (Candelier et al., 2012; Gkaintartzi & Katsara, 2024; Möller-Omrani et al., 2026). As mentioned in the framework, this approach is one of the possible ways of implementing LA in educational contexts, and consists of an integrative, interdisciplinary, and transversal approach (Candelier et al., 2004) that suggests the implementation of educational work with different languages and cultures. These could be either the languages of students’ backgrounds, linguistic varieties, or local and/or minority languages. These languages, although not being part

of the school's curriculum could become part of it through an AtL intervention (Candelier & Kervran, 2018) in the form of preparation for linguistic and cultural diversity that should, ideally, be enacted in the first years of schooling (Coelho et al., 2018; Kearney & Ahn, 2013; Maad, 2021). In a few words, AtL can be defined as "language learning pedagogies which capitalize on the diverse language repertoires that students bring into the classroom" (Le Pichon-Vorstman et al., 2020, p. 36). The emergence of these approaches comes along with the needs and idiosyncrasies of today's societies that are more heterogeneous and complex in terms of their linguistic and cultural diversity, thus serving as ways of integrating students' backgrounds (Tammenga-Helmantel et al., 2022).

Thus, this approach allows the development of the following dimensions: i) cognitive, as it is envisioned that individuals acquire an understanding of how languages work, as well as what distinguishes and approximates them; ii) sociolinguistic, since it is intended that individuals analyse the diversity of the world's languages beyond the languages of their social environment; iii) psychological, as it allows individuals to think beyond their mother tongue; iv) and affective, through the development of positive attitudes towards languages and cultures (Maad, 2021). In this sense, AtL seeks to promote knowledge of the world's languages and cultures, the development of positive attitudes towards them, the appreciation of individuals' linguistic and cultural repertoires, as well as solidarity and cooperation between individuals (Candelier et al., 2004; Candelier et al., 2012; Candelier & Kervran, 2018).

In short, this approach adds significant value to language learning and student integration by valuing diversity and the unique backgrounds present in educational contexts. By doing so, it promotes social justice and strengthens students' identity, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. Furthermore, it enriches the ability to compare, adapt, and perform metalinguistic operations, encouraging students to think beyond the 'boxes' of monolingual instruction. However, certain limitations must be considered, especially for educators intending to implement AtL, since there is a possibility of superficiality, which could undermine the intended benefits. To avoid this, educators must maintain a critical perspective, frequently questioning students' assumptions and prejudices. Therefore, the goal of AtL is not merely to present representations of languages and cultures, but to actively integrate, transform, and challenge the learner and the process of learning.

METHOD

In this section, we present and discuss the methodological procedures taken in this narrative literature review namely the data collection criteria. Narrative literature review, also known as traditional qualitative review (Rozas & Klein, 2010), intends to identify what exists in the literature of a specific field (Baumeister & Leary, 1997) and to discuss it to identify gaps in knowledge through a narrated and comprehensive overview presented in a synthesized format (Green et al., 2006). A narrative literature review was carried out in this study as a way to provide a comprehensive qualitative synthesis of the field's evolution, allowing for an exploration of how the discourse has shifted across different authors and decades, as well as to mapping school-based initiatives and historical trends in a less rigid way, giving the authors more flexibility to include only the articles regarding LA and AtL. Considering the aims, within the scope of this literature review we pretended to understand how this approach has



been (re)constructed over the years, identify authors of relevance considered by the articles and collect suggestions of didactic activities following the LA movement and an AtL approach.

DATA COLLECTION

The following process was trailed: Phase 1) definition of criteria for the data collection and of the keywords for the database search; Phase 2) search in different databases and repositories; Phase 3) reading of titles and abstracts of the articles found in the searches; Phase 4) reading of the full articles considered relevant in the previous phase; and Phase 5) extraction of selected articles and organization of the corpus using *Mendeley*.

The data collection in the different databases and repositories began in an exploratory way since we did not know which platforms would have the necessary data to achieve our aims. Therefore, a search was carried out in several databases and repositories to exhaust all the possibilities and obtain a satisfactory corpus. As a result, we ended up using the following databases: Scopus, ERIC, Taylor & Francis, and Web of Science. Regarding the defined criteria, we searched for scientific articles published between 2012 (the publication year of FREPA) and 2022 (the year in which the searches were carried out) written in Portuguese, English, or Spanish. In addition to the criteria already presented, we also defined other inclusion criteria that were applied in Phase 3, which corresponded to the reading of the articles: i) to identify reference authors, such as Eric Hawkins and Michel Candelier, or to mention CARAP/FREPA; ii) to discuss the approach from the perspective of these authors; and iii) to present suggestions of activities to implement awakening to languages in educational contexts. This criteria was used to select the articles. To this end, we searched for the words “Hawkins”, “Candelier”, “FREPA” and “CARAP” in the body of the articles and carried out a screening reading in search for activities. This procedure was carried out in all articles that we found relevant in Phase 2, that is, after verifying their relevance by reading the respective titles and abstracts. Editorials were not selected since they do not fit in the criterion of being an article. It is important to clarify that these criteria were intended to narrow the scope of the search to include only articles based on the AtL approach. This was necessary because several initial results were not closely related to LA or AtL. While this choice may introduce certain biases or limit the breadth of the results, our goal was to focus specifically on studies related to the 'founding authors' previously identified. Consequently, we adopted a narrative literature review to achieve this aim.

In table 1 we present the keywords used in each one of the different searches, the years selected and the number of articles we collected from each search. The year range set was 2012-2022, but some databases didn't allow us to apply that because they didn't have articles before 2016 and after 2021, so that's the reason why in some searches it only appears the range of “2016-2021”.

Table 1
Research data procedures and results in the different databases

Database	Keywords	Years	Number of articles collected
Scopus	TITLE awakening to languages	2016 - 2021	1
ERIC	“awakening to languages”	–	1
Taylor & Francis (1st)	TITLE awakening to languages	2016 - 2021	2
Taylor & Francis (2nd)	TITLE language awareness	2016 - 2021	2
Taylor & Francis (3rd)	TITLE language awareness; subject education	2012 - 2021	1
Taylor & Francis (4th) – Language Awareness Journal	FREPA	–	2
Web of Science	TITLE “language awareness”	10 years (2012-2022)	5

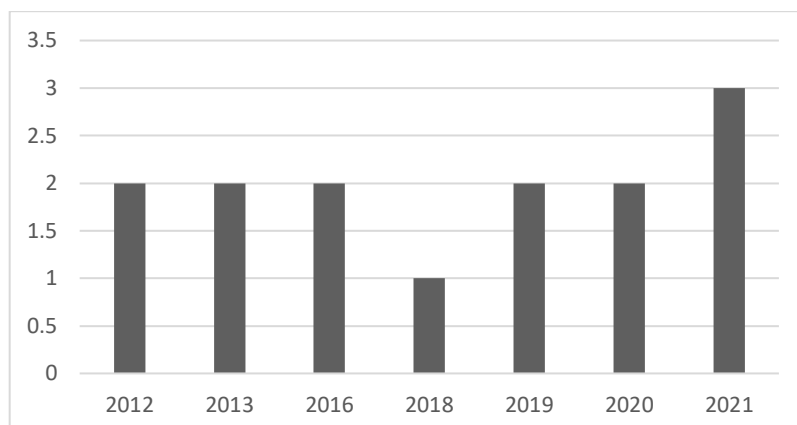
After collecting the articles, we organized them by using Mendeley and Excel, having constituted a corpus of 14 articles. Then, the articles were coded to ensure better organization and were numbered from A1 to A14 (Appendix A). From now on, the articles will be mentioned by their respective codes. Therefore, it is recommended to consult the attached table for a better understanding of the next section, corresponding to the data analysis.

CORPUS CHARACTERIZATION

After constituting the corpus of analysis, we proceeded to code data into a priori categories, with the help of *webQDA*. Thus, in this section, we will characterize the corpus, describe the data analysis, and present the results. We begin by characterizing the corpus of analysis regarding specificities such as the years of publication, the geographical distribution of the articles, and the groups of people involved in the articles. In terms of the years of publication, we obtained articles with some temporal distribution within the years defined as inclusion criteria in the previous section, without the presence of articles from the year 2022, which can be justified by the fact that the searches were carried out at the beginning of that civil year. The temporal distribution of the articles can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1
Temporal distribution of the articles



The geographic contexts of the articles are varied with some predominance of the United Kingdom (three articles), where the AtL approach was initially theorized by Eric Hawkins, and in Canada (three articles). However, there is also some representativeness of articles from the Netherlands (two articles), Malta (two articles), Tunisia (two articles), United States of America (one article) and Portugal (one article). This geographic diversity seems to help understand the adaptability of the approach to different contexts and to different needs. That is, the approach does not seem to be developed in the same way in a context such as the United Kingdom – which faces great diversity of languages and cultures in educational contexts derived from migration, along with great difficulty in achieving positive results in terms of literacy in the mother tongue and in foreign languages (A8) – or in a context such as Tunisia, which promotes AtL as a way of enriching the national curriculum and encouraging learning and contact with languages and cultures as a stimulus for increasing competitiveness and opening up to international markets (A6).

It should be noted that, out of the three articles developed in the United Kingdom, two of them were literature reviews and not empirical articles developed in educational contexts. However, we decided to include them because they met the inclusion criteria related to the reference to the studies by Eric Hawkins and Michel Candelier and, consequently, allow a better understanding of the approach and the identification of relevant authors and of some activities developed by the articles they analysed. The analysis of the articles concerning its typology and target public revealed that: i) most are empirical articles that focus on activities in formal classroom contexts (A3, A4, A6, A7, A11, and A14); ii) there is some prevalence of articles in early years, with preschool students (A3, A7 and A13) and primary education students (A4, A6, A11 and A14), but there are also articles focusing on secondary school students participants (A9 and A12) and university (A2 and A10); and iii) some articles focus on teachers' perceptions and practices about the AtL approach and its implementation in school contexts (A9 and A12). Only one article mentions individuals outside the school community with varied linguistic and cultural repertoires in the AtL sessions, as invited partners or guest readers of stories, to allow students to have contact with them and with their languages and cultures (A11). One article, A3, mentions the possibility of including them in future research, and, since it was only a possibility and not a concretization, we did not consider that they were, in fact, research participants in that article. This comes align with the fact that, theoretically, few articles address the

importance of the involvement of the various educational actors in building bridges between school and family (A5 and A8), as well as the cooperation between teachers of different subjects (A5). This seems to be an important aspect of an approach that has collaboration and establishment of connections as its core values. We can consult this data summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Typology of the articles and of the participants

Empirical articles			
Pre-school students	Elementary school students	Middle school students	Teachers
2 articles (A3 e A7)	3 articles (A4, A6 and A14)	1 article (A111)	2 articles (A9 and A12)
Teacher trainers	Future teachers	University students	Individuals outside the school community
1 article (A123)	1 article (A10)	1 article (A2)	1 article (A11)
Literature Reviews			
4 articles (A1, A5, A8 and A13)			

CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

The corpus was subjected to content analysis (Weber, 1990). Coding was undertaken using a qualitative analysis tool, *webQDA*. Coding categories were constituted a priori to answer the aims of the study and are the following: authors of reference, definition of the approach, and suggested AtL activities. Findings will be presented and discussed according to these categories.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

AUTHORS OF REFERENCE

Regarding the first category of analysis, we coded all the references to authors that appeared in the sections related to the AtL approach of the articles' theoretical frameworks. In cases where the articles mentioned more than one theoretical concept, such as the concept of globalization (A13), or referred to other theories, such as the theory of language acquisition (A8), these references were not considered for purposes of enumeration, as our focus was on the AtL approach and on what was associated with



it (such as, for example, the language awareness movement). The coding resulted in a total of 170 authors associated with the AtL approach.

After this first identification, we identified the most cited authors. Given the reduced corpus that we obtained, we considered the most cited authors all those who were cited in four or more articles. We therefore present, in order of frequency, the most cited ones: Eric Hawkins (referred to by 11 articles); Anna Schröder-Sura (6 articles); Antoinette Camilleri Grima (6 articles); Artur Nogueroles (6 articles); Ildikó Lörincz (6 articles); Franz-Joseph Meißner (6 articles); Jean-François de Pietro (6 articles); Michel Candelier (6 articles); Véronique Castellotti (6 articles); Agneta Svalberg (4 articles); Christine Hélot (4 articles) and Françoise Armand (4 articles). Some results, as the frequency of citations to authors such as Eric Hawkins and Michel Candelier, were expected, since one of the inclusion criteria was the citation of one of these authors. We emphasize that the fact that we only selected articles that mentioned Hawkins or Candelier allowed us to identify authors cited by the articles that, presumably, fall within a perspective of the AtL approach more directed to the school of thought of Hawkins and Candelier, which was of our interest since it is the theoretical position that we intend to follow.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE APPROACH

In this category, we identified the common points mentioned by the articles when defining the AtL approach and analysed convergences and divergences. In general terms, AtL is defined as a pedagogical-didactic approach aimed at raising awareness towards linguistic and cultural diversity, the knowledge and understanding of this diversity and of its specificities and importance in individuals' lives. The theoretical frameworks converge on the approach's nature as one which aims to build bridges between languages, cultures, and subjects for the improvement of the quality of education. There also seems to be an agreement concerning its plural and holistic scope to foster and promote inter and transdisciplinarity. The aim of AtL approach is, according to the articles, to deepen knowledge about the way languages evolve, function and are used in everyday life. In this sense, AtL in educational contexts allows crossing the boundary from mere language learning towards reflection about languages and cultures.

Some of the articles present AtL in a strict sense only related to languages and without reference to cultures or to the relationship between both. Eight articles underline that AtL includes an analysis of the intrinsic relationship between language and culture and between languages and language-speaking individuals (A1, A3, A6, A7, A8, A11, A13 and A14). Only two articles include in their theoretical frameworks that one of the aims of AtL is to achieve intercultural communicative competence (A3 and A6) and one mentions that it contributes to a change in the way individuals perceive the culture in which they live (A6).

Most of the articles mention the development of diversity awareness as essential in the early years (A7 and A13) and in teacher education (A10), with only one article referring to the importance of involving the wider educational community, such as student's families (A14). A8 highlights the need to involve educators and policy makers in the implementation of the approach in educational settings. It also mentions that AtL can have several levels of awareness, from a knowledge of the diversity and of the functioning of languages to allow reflection and deepening on the impact of languages on human life, on their evolution throughout history and on the development of relations with others and with otherness.



The articles also mention the establishment of relationships between the approach and other concepts such as: multilingualism (A5, A7, A11 and A12), multilingual language awareness (A8) and critical multilingual language awareness (A10); plurilingualism (A10) and plurilingual competence (A7); languaging (A5) and translanguaging (A12); metalingualism (A10), metalanguage (A8), metalinguistic awareness (A7) and metalinguistic competence (A10 and A14); communicative competence (A7); intercultural communicative competence (A3 and A6) and (critical) (inter)cultural awareness (A1, A3 and A8); critical language awareness (A10); and the theory of language acquisition (A8).

Following the establishment of relations between concepts when defining the approach, a certain parallel evolution to AtL can be noted, which appears related to approaches such as critical language awareness and critical cultural awareness as theorized by Michael Byram (A1). These concepts seem to complement the understanding of the approach considering its metamorphosis and employment of different strategies and concern with the development of diversified competencies to ensure the materialisation of the holistic scope that is set in the origins of the approach. Some articles indicate the importance of reflection in the process of awakening, the development of critical questioning and the possible transformation of educational communities – and, broadly, of societies – as potentialities of this approach (A1 and A13). Nevertheless, they also mention that, sometimes, this approach ends up encountering barriers in educational contexts, such as difficulties in deciding which languages should be included and the fact that there is sometimes some tension between different language education theories (A8).

ACTIVITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING ATL IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

Considering the third category of analysis of this study, we searched for suggestions of activities which served the purpose of implementing AtL in educational settings. This was one of the aims of this literature review, so one of the criteria which we valued for the constitution of the corpus of analysis was the reference to activities in the articles. The suggestions consist, essentially, in activities of: reflection on the processes of contact and discovery of linguistic and cultural diversity, such as the construction of reflective journals during the process of contact with different languages and cultures (A2, A5 and A10); role playing in different languages (A7); identification and exploration of the languages that exist in different contexts through the analysis of linguistic landscapes (A10 and A12); analysis of etymology and phonetics in recordings of people speaking different dialects (A4); analysis and discussion of texts in different languages (A4 and A9); comparison of features of different languages (A8 and A12); translation (A10); listening and/or singing songs in different languages (A3, A4, A6 and A13); dancing (A6 and A13) and playing games in different languages (A3, A6, A7 and A13); interviews from the students to people from different countries (A5); contact with people from different countries through videos and letters (A2 and A14); listening to and (re)writing stories in different languages (A3, A4, A7 and A13); and preparing meals referring to the cuisine of different countries (A6). The activities suggested focus on reflection, teamwork, and autonomy, in addition to the use of authentic contexts and materials. Reflection is the only aspect considered as part of the LA movement (Dubiner, 2018; Svalberg, 2012), with the others not being mentioned by the theoretical frameworks as being essential in the LA movement or the AtL approach, but the fact that they appear associated with the



activities seems to suggest that the development of such competencies can be associated with the intervention work following LA or AtL.

Even though these activities were suggested by the articles, there is a lack of information given considering the aims, which are sometimes mistaken with the objectives. There is also almost no information regarding the development of the activities. For example, it seems to be lacunar to say that activities of reflection were carried out without saying which activities were developed, since “activities of reflection” can encompass various activities. Also, aims of the activities are not provided by the articles nor the steps of the activities, which could be important to make it possible the replication of these activities in other contexts. The complete list of activities, organised by articles, can be consulted in the Appendix B.

DISCUSSION

The data collected during the process of this literature review allowed us to understand some aspects and trends of the LA theory and the AtL approach in the last years. Considering the categories established, we see a convergence of cited authors in the articles, which explains the transversal foci in the theoretical frameworks of the articles concerning LA and AtL, although there is also some field for diversity considering the several concepts that appear associated with LA and AtL throughout the 14 articles of our corpus of analysis. The activities suggested in the articles are diverse in terms of strategies, but there are aspects in common related to the competencies that students should develop, namely at the level of the ability to reflect, work autonomously and in groups and raise consciousness about the process of learning and contacting with languages and cultures.

The convergence in the authors mentioned in the articles showed us that the keywords that we defined led us to a specific web of researchers more connected to LA as defined by Hawkins and AtL as defined by Candelier. Also, it gave us access to research mainly developed in European contexts, where aspects related to political and social issues, such as immigration and European Union’s policies on linguistic and cultural diversity, may influence the interest in discussing the approach and adopting it in school contexts. Although it can be considered as a limitation of the study, it also ensures that the analysis is grounded in robust and longitudinally tested frameworks and supported by the know-how provided by the large-scale European projects like EVLANG and JALING.

Considering the category related to the definition of the approach, findings allow us to reflect on how the AtL approach has been built over the last years, as well as to observe a certain parallel evolution associated with approaches like critical language awareness (Huang & Guo, 2024) and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2012). There does not seem to be much divergence in the conceptualisation of the approach, although it seems interesting to note that each article establishes connections between the approach and concepts that somehow contribute to the broader understanding of the approach. This may indicate that there is a perceived need to conjugate AtL with other concepts as a way to address the needs of a complex world, moving beyond merely “noticing” languages to actively fostering metalinguistic awareness and translanguaging skills (Roehr-Brackin, 2024; Torregrossa & Carbonara, 2026).

The importance of the joint work of teachers, students and families is a key aspect in the conceptualization of the approach in the articles. Actively creating spaces where families act as linguistic experts rather than passive observers seems to empower the

families as the providers of linguistic input and also transforms the role of students, something that is reinforced by recent studies (Facciani, 2024; Szelei et al, 2024).

We highlight as surprising the results concerning the third category, since the activities suggested are not always clear and/or specific, do not present concrete aims and, in some cases, even seem to be mistaken with objectives. An example of such are the activities of reflection on languages, which seem to indicate more an objective than a proper activity but are referred to in the articles as activities and, for this reason, were included in this category in the present literature review. Considering the aims of the articles analysed and the fact that the AtL approach is strongly linked to practice, it seems that there is some gap to fill in terms of practical guidance and suggestion of activities.

CONCLUSION

This article pursued the intention of exploring the AtL approach in what concerned authors who research in this specific area, conceptualizations on it and pedagogic activities implemented in school contexts following that approach. As mentioned in the FREPA, AtL is strongly linked to the LA movement, which is why we explored that connection in the theoretical framework of this article and also included the keywords both of the movement and of the approach in the process of data collection. Considering this, we may put some reflection on the fact that during the analysis we were more focused on AtL and saw LA as a way to understand the path towards AtL. This aspect can be a focus of criticism of this article and may appear as a limitation, but we must mention that this literature review served the aim of having a first exploration of the area and further work must be carried on. Continuing the identification of some of the limitations of the present literature review, it must be noted that we felt the need to change the criteria for data collection during the process of searches in databases, adding keywords and changing the years of publication of the articles. This occurred due to the initial lack of results with the necessary content to answer our research aims. However, we tried to document the process as clear as possible to ensure rigour.

Despite its limitations, this literature review provided some insight on how the AtL approach remains deeply rooted in foundational European frameworks, such as EVLANG and JALING. This geographical and conceptual concentration provides a high level of theoretical consistency, although it was possible to understand that the evolution of the AtL approach includes the interrelation with other concepts such as multilingualism, (critical) (inter)cultural awareness, metalinguistic competence, translanguaging and also with current trends such as the use of AI. This evolution reflects an educational need to move beyond the mere recognition of linguistic diversity toward a more transformative model.

The findings highlight some lack of activities and guidance for practitioners and while the approach successfully promotes inclusive attitudes and validates the linguistic identities of students and their families, the lack of guidance for the replication of these activities in other contexts may limit its implementation. If the articles provided the aims of the activities and the detailed process of its implementation in educational contexts, educators could reflect about the potential of including LA and AtL and be inspired to implement these activities into their practice. Future research and publications could, therefore, prioritize the development of structured didactic materials and this study can be seen as a first attempt to identify what exists in the literature of the area that can



serve as a basis for more in-depth work in the future or even provide clues for future lines of research.

Concluding, we consider that this analysis provided some field for thought and has some potential for discussion of the current conceptualization of the approach and of the strategies that are being implemented in educational contexts. The scientific contribution of this review lies in the way it highlights a growing trend to integrate AtL with frameworks like critical language awareness and translanguaging to meet contemporary societal complexities while it exposes a gap in the literature regarding the lack of clear, actionable and replicable classroom activities. By highlighting this apparent disconnection between AtL's strong sense of joint work and of practical application and the imprecision of some of its suggested activities, this review provides insights for researchers and teacher educators to disseminate more structured activities that may enable its replication and promote a shared and interconnected web of intervention in AtL.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: S. T.-S.; Methodology: S. T.-S.; Software: S. T.-S.; Validation: A. R. S. and S. P.; Formal Analysis, Investigation: S. T.-S.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation: S. T.-S.; Writing – Review & Editing: A. R. S. and S. P.; Supervision: A. R. S. and S. P.; Funding Acquisition: S. T.-S.

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APPENDIX A

CORPUS OF ANALYSIS

Codes	Bibliographic references	Countries ²
A1	Byram, M. (2012). Language awareness and (critical) cultural awareness – relationships, comparisons and contrasts. <i>Language Awareness</i> , 21(1–2), 5-13. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2011.639887	United Kingdom
A2	Kennedy, S. (2012). Exploring the Relationship Between Language Awareness and Second Language Use. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 46(2), 398-408. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.24	Canada
A3	Kearney, E., & Ahn, S.-Y. (2013). Awakening to world languages: Intercultural awareness in very young learners. <i>Learning Languages</i> , 18(2), 44-48. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1090897&scope=site	USA
A4	Grima, A. C., Buttigieg, L., & Xerri, J. (2013). Gozitan dialects in the classroom and language awareness for learner empowerment. <i>International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism</i> , 16(5), 589-601. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2012.716815	Malta
A5	Svalberg, A. M. L. (2016). Language Awareness research: Where we are now. <i>Language Awareness</i> , 25(1–2), 4-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2015.1122027	United Kingdom
A6	Maad, M. R. Ben. (2016). Awakening young children to foreign languages: Openness to diversity highlighted. <i>Language, Culture and Curriculum</i> , 29(3), 319-336. https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2016.1184679	Tunisia
A7	Coelho, D., Andrade, A. I., & Portugal, G. (2018). The “Awakening to Languages” approach at preschool: Developing children’s communicative competence. <i>Language Awareness</i> , 27(3), 197-221. https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2018.1486407	Portugal
A8	Kelly, M. (2019). Language awareness in a comprehensive approach do language teaching and learning. <i>Journal of E-Learning and Knowledge Society</i> , 15(1), 37-54. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20368/1971-8829/1616	United Kingdom
A9	Van den Broek, E. W. R., Oolbekkink-Marchand, H. W., van Kemenade, A. M. C., Meijer, P. C., & Unsworth, S. (2019). Stimulating language awareness in the foreign language classroom: Exploring EFL teaching practices. <i>Language Learning Journal</i> , 50(1), 59-73. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2019.1688857	Netherlands
A10	Grima, A. C. (2020). What’s in a house name? Student-teachers’ dialogic encounters with multilingual texts in the environment. <i>Language Awareness</i> , 29(3–4), 201-221. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2020.1782416	Malta
A11	Zaidi, R. (2020). Dual-Language Books: Enhancing Engagement and Language Awareness. <i>Journal of Literacy Research</i> , 52(3), 269-292. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X20939559	Canada

² Countries where research was carried out.



Codes	Bibliographic references	Countries ²
A12	Makarova, I., Duarte, J., & Huilcán, M. I. (2021). Experts' views on the contribution of language awareness and translanguaging for minority language education. <i>Language Awareness</i> , 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2021.1963976	Netherlands
A13	Maad, M. R. Ben. (2021). Embracing balance in early childhood education: The case of awakening to languages pedagogy. <i>International Journal of Learning and Change</i> , 13(1), 92-106. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJLC.2021.111661	Tunisia
A14	Dion, S., Hilbert, J., Howse, C., Lemaire, E., Lothian, R., & McKenzie, A. (2021). Construire des ponts entre les communautés francophones et métisses par l'éveil aux langues : exemple d'un dispositif pédagogique proposé au primaire dans les écoles francophones et les programmes d'immersion. <i>Éducation Et Francophonie</i> , 49(1), 32-51. https://doi.org/10.7202/1077000ar	Canada

APPENDIX B

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ACTIVITIES MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLES

Codes	Target groups	Activities
A1	–	Reflection on the relationship between language and culture through the analysis of the use of languages in different regions.
A2	University students	Identification of the individuals' linguistic repertoires and their language contact habits through the implementation of a questionnaire and the writing of a reflexive journal.
A3	Preschool children	Translation games, analysis and comparison of words and languages through games with curiosities about languages and cultures; listening and singing songs in different languages; contact with a puppet who speaks a foreign language and with whom the students can only talk in that language; and weekly seminars with partners (non-academic, native speakers of other languages) on the importance of awakening to diversity.
A4	Primary school students	Analysis of the regional variety of languages; reflection on the difference between animal and human communication; analysis of the sounds in different languages and the differences of accent within the same language; analysis of the role of languages in human life; and discussion on the use of language varieties according to context with the use of different types of written text (stories, advertisements, news) and oral text (recordings).
A5	–	Reflection on the specificities of languages using literature and music content in different languages; use of the reflective diary to promote reflection on the awakening process; and interviews to individuals with different linguistic and cultural repertoires.
A6	Primary school students	Discovery of the languages around them, comparison of them to identify differences and similarities; dancing and singing songs in different languages; playing language literacy games; preparing meals referring to the cuisine of different countries; and wearing traditional attire from different countries.
A7	Preschool children	Exploration and comparison of the sounds of different languages; comparison of the writing systems of the different languages of the world; identification of the students' linguistic repertoire; contact with different languages through multilingual games; identification of the specificities of the languages and cultures of the world; listening to stories in different languages; role playing using different languages and different registers within the same language in different contexts; description of people and situations in different languages; listening to stories in different languages so that they can retell the story in their own mother tongue; and contact with tongue twisters in different languages.
A8	–	Comparison of features of different languages.
A9	Secondary school students	Analysis of the history, phonetics and etymology of words and languages; identification of the evolution of words over time; and identification of family relationships between languages.



Codes	Target groups	Activities
A10	Pre-service teachers	Developing a project to identify, categorise and analyse the linguistic landscape of students' neighbourhood doorsteps which may involve establishing partnerships with the inhabitants of that neighbourhood to delve deeper into the reasons for their language choices; constructing a reflective diary on the process of discovery and analysis of the linguistic landscape; and etymological and polysemic analysis of the words they encounter during the linguistic landscape project.
A11	Teachers, primary school students and school community	Exploring the specificities of languages, comparing and translating them, using bilingual books; having conversations with community guests to read stories in different languages and to tell their own personal stories of language contact and multilingual experiences; analysing interlanguage, comparing differences and similarities between the languages in the stories; reflecting on the process of raising awareness of diversity; students' creation of poems describing their language repertoires; identifying and analysing the origins of languages; comparing the writing systems of the world's languages; comparing different accents within the same language; reflecting on students' linguistic-cultural repertoires; translating and comparing words, texts and sounds in different languages; identifying geographical and historical issues associated with the emergence of language varieties; and drawing their favourite foods from different cultures.
A12	Secondary school teachers	Exploring the specificities of minority languages by collecting and analysing the linguistic landscapes of their neighbourhoods and schools; comparing languages at the level of writing and phonetics; discussing and reflecting on language choices in different contexts; and creating an etymological film comparing languages from the language landscapes they identified.
A13	Preschool students	Listening to stories in different languages and rewriting them in the students' mother tongues; playing language games; and listening and dancing to songs in different languages.
A14	Primary students	Creation of an educational device with videos and texts from the different languages of the community; and contact with a person from the community who speaks a dialect and shares his or her language experiences with the pupils.