

Jean-Marc Dewaele

Jean-Marc Dewaele is a prominent researcher in multilingual language acquisition and use. Born in 1962 in Bruges (Belgium), he discovered early the joys and pains of growing up with two languages. While the local community spoke Flemish (a local variety of Dutch), his father, a native-speaking schoolteacher of French, enforced French at home. Upon entering the Dutch-speaking primary school, the young Jean-Marc was shocked to discover that his Dutch proficiency was not sufficient for schooling, and his French speaking made him be considered pretentious. The first seed was planted for his lifelong reflection on bilingualism.

An academically inclined young man, Dewaele completed five postgraduate degrees in two years, spanning languages (Romance philology, Spanish, neurolinguistics) and international studies (International and European Law, Eastern European Affairs). Juggling between language and law classes, he developed an early enthusiasm for cross-disciplinary work that remained throughout his life, while the acquisition of Spanish made him a quadrilingual (French_{L1}-Dutch_{L1}-English_{L2}-Spanish_{L3}) speaker. A qualified language teacher since 1985, he taught French for more than 15 years. He completed his PhD in Romance languages and literature at the Free University of Brussels in 1993 with a thesis on French interlanguage under the supervision of Professor Hugo Baetens Beardsmore. He entered into a Dutch-French bilingual marriage and relocated to London in 1994 to take up a Lectureship in French at Birkbeck College, University of London. In 1996 his family life became trilingual with the birth of his English-French-Dutch trilingual daughter Livia. He was appointed Professor in Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism in 2010, and in 2023 became Emeritus Professor at Birkbeck and Honorary Professor at University College London.

Dewaele's most influential work centres on emotions in multilinguals and language learners. He started investigating emotions in the early 2000s, when research was notably scarce. In the first few years he collaborated with Aneta Pavlenko (e.g., Pavlenko & Dewaele, 2004), and the two had a pivotal role in rapidly bringing the topic to the attention of the L2 research community by organising academic events and editing special issues. Dewaele went on to (co-)author dozens of publications on the topic, including the monograph *Emotions in multiple languages* (Dewaele, 2013), and exploring emotions in the language classroom (investigating both learners' and teachers' emotions), in identity, in inner speech, often investigating anxiety, as well as anger and its expression in swearing. His work shaped applied linguists' understanding of the role of emotions in second languages and multilingualism. Two developments discussed below are particularly noteworthy.

In the early 2010s, Dewaele initiated research on the interplay between language and emotions in psychotherapy. This was another unexplored issue, and again his interest was spurred by an encounter with a researcher and practitioner from a different background, the psychotherapist Dr Beverly Costa. Apart from publishing research (Costa & Dewaele, 2014), Dewaele and Costa developed award-winning training materials to improve psychotherapists' awareness of multilingualism and intercultural communication with multilingual patients.

A few years later, his research on emotions took another new direction. He disliked the predominant focus on anxiety dominating the field since the 1980s, partly because of his sunny disposition, and partly due to his conception of emotion in L2 learning and use as intricate, involving the coexistence, interaction, and constant evolution of various emotions. Inspired by the principles of Positive Psychology that were entering SLA, he co-authored an article with Peter MacIntyre, calling for a more balanced approach to the study of both positive and negative emotions (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Among other developments,

the article introduced the concept of Foreign Language Enjoyment, which has since been garnering considerable attention. While still believing in the importance of anxiety, and publishing widely about enjoyment, Dewaele increasingly investigated the two together and with other emotions (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2023).

Apart from his major role in catalysing what has been called the ‘emotional turn’ in L2 research, Dewaele has made other notable contributions to theory, such as introducing the successful term ‘LX’ to replace ‘L2’ in referring to languages other than the first one (Dewaele, 2018), and to methodology, as seen in his contributions to the development of instruments for measuring emotions, such as the widely-used Foreign Language Enjoyment scale (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

Dewaele is a prolific and influential researcher. He has (co-)authored over 350 scholarly publications and given over 80 plenaries and 130 presentations. At the time of writing (2023), Google Scholar lists 34,000 citations, and Elsevier ranks him 3rd worldwide for citations in Languages and Linguistics. His work has been recognised with several awards, including the Equality and Diversity Research Award from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013, with Beverly Costa), the Robert Gardner Award for Outstanding Research in Bilingualism from the International Association of Language and Social Psychology (2016), and the EuroSLA Distinguished Scholar Award from the European Second Language Association (2022).

Dewaele is also a prominent member of the applied linguistics research community. His leadership positions include being President of the European Second Language Association (2007-2011), the International Association of Multilingualism (2016-2018), and the International Association for the Psychology of Language Learning (2022-2024), as well as being General Editor of the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (2013-2018) and the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (2019-ongoing).

Dewaele is a highly sociable researcher. He believes that research is a collective endeavour, and that his best work started by communicating and collaborating with others, particularly across disciplinary boundaries. This is partly a theoretical standing, and partly due to his outgoing personality. He enjoys bringing people together by both co-authoring and (co-)editing, and is especially keen on training the next generation of scholars. He supervised more than thirty doctoral students and has published with many early-career researchers. He is also keen on outreach work, such as a book for parents and teachers of multilingual children (Festman et al., 2017). He is much liked for his friendliness and, although his cheeky sense of humour may deter some, without it he could never have become the world-leading expert in second language swearing.

References

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Further Reading

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