

CHAPTER 29

EXPRESSIVITY AND PEDAGOGICAL LINGUISTICS

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29.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a growing recent interest in exploring to what extent insights from theoretical linguistics and empirical linguistics (corpus and experimental/psycholinguistic work) can be applied to language learning, language education, and education more generally, especially in the areas of education in pre-university classrooms and teacher training (see [Van Rijt 2024](#) for a recent overview and [Trotzke & Kupisch 2020](#), [Corr & Pineda 2023](#) for representative collections). Many have used the term *pedagogical linguistics* in this context ([Hudson 2020](#), [Trotzke & Rankin 2020](#), [Trotzke 2023](#), [Sheehan et al. 2024](#); and many others). The term has also been adopted both for specific languages taught in the classroom such as Romance languages ('pedagogical linguistics in Romance'; [Feldhausen 2022](#)) and for more specific subjects such as second language pragmatics ([Bardovi-Harlig 2020](#)).

In this chapter, I will focus on the role expressivity plays in pedagogical linguistics by looking at cases in point such as the learning challenges in the domain of emotional

vocabulary, as well as at further cases of expressive language that convey similar meanings and therefore seem to pose analogous learning challenges. My focus will thus be on phenomena of expressivity in the narrow sense ((↔ *Expressivity and multidimensional semantics* by DANIEL GUTZMANN, Chapter 11 of this volume); (↔ *Expressivity and information structure* by ANDREAS TROTZKE, Chapter 27 of this volume)), namely on emotions and attitudes as conveyed via language. Right at the outset of this article, it is worth noting that – to my knowledge – expressive language is a rather marginal topic in classroom reflections on language (see also (↔ *Expressivity and bilingualism* by ARIANA N. MOHAMMADI, Chapter 30 of this volume)). Expressive language is sometimes mentioned in the context of reflecting on so-called ‘youth language’ (see Morek 2016 for the German context), but it is neither an established nor a distinct topic in language classrooms.

The most prominent discussions in pedagogical contexts about how aspects of language evoke emotions and attitudes do thus not refer to *what* is learned and taught in the classroom (i.e., the object of relevant pedagogies; e.g., expressive language); rather, the literature on classroom teaching very often refers to *how* emotions and attitudes play a role in the learning and teaching domains when individuals find themselves in a relevant classroom setting. This has been called the ‘affective turn’ in research on second language acquisition (Pavlenko 2012) and the ‘emotional turn’ in applied linguistics more generally (C. J. White 2018). Since the field of pedagogical linguistics is characterized both by looking at the components of language to be learned and taught in the classroom and by choosing between relevant teaching methodologies and pedagogies, the following sections will provide a brief overview of attitudes towards aspects of the language classroom as well.

The chapter is structured as follows. In Section 29.2, I will first focus on the question what kind of attitudes student teachers in the language classroom have towards prominent linguistic concepts such as grammar and multilingualism. The discussion will focus on evaluative attitudes, and it will also take into account the student teachers’ subjective feelings (their ‘confidence’) about their abilities in teaching linguistic concepts in their classroom teaching. Section 29.3 turns to prominent cases of expressive language in pedagogical linguistics by illustrating major learning challenges in that domain. Specifically, I will first focus on the lively field of research into multilingualism and emotional vocabulary. Based on this discussion, I will extend the main observations to second language learning of other domains of expressive meaning such as emotional readings conveyed by particle elements in languages like German. Section 29.4 summarizes and concludes the chapter and points to some recent teaching methodologies.

29.2 AFFECTIVE BELIEFS ABOUT GRAMMAR AND MULTILINGUALISM

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In this section, I first introduce some of the most prevailing attitudes towards linguistics and language learning more generally. Emotional attitudes in particular have become a topic in the language learning and teaching sciences as part of a development in that field

of research known as the ‘affective’ or ‘emotional turn’ in applied linguistics and second language acquisition (Pavlenko 2012, C. J. White 2018).

Traditionally, the applied fields of both language learning and teaching have been characterized by the prominent role of cognitive factors (see Borg 2015 for teacher cognition and Littlemore 2023 and Slabakova et al. 2020 for comprehensive recent studies on the learners’ cognition within different cognitive frameworks).¹ However, it has long been noted that cognition and emotion in the domain of teaching and learning languages are of course closely intertwined (Swain 2013). One classical example is Krashen’s (1982) notion of an affective filter in his Affective Filter hypothesis as part of his cognitive theory of second language acquisition:

The Affective Filter hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their Affective Filters. Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter – even if they understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition [...] (Krashen 1982: 31)

Until more recently, those ‘affective variables’ mentioned by Krashen (1982) have only been loosely defined within cognitive theories of language. In other words, before the affective turn took place in the early 2000s or so, affects and emotions were lumped together under what Pavlenko (2012) has characterized as the ‘affective factors paradigm’. In short, the role of affect and emotion in language learning and teaching is mentioned, but only vaguely so, as illustrated by Ellis’s notion of affective state:

The learner’s affective state is influenced by a number of factors, for example, anxiety, a desire to compete, and whether learners feel they are progressing or not. It is hypothesized that it can influence the rate of L2 acquisition and the ultimate level of achievement. (Ellis 2008: 1953-1954)

The more recent affective turn in this domain is distinguished by a “replacement of a single paradigm (affective factors) with a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches” (Pavlenko 2012: 9), and those different subfields and approaches all target separate domains such as linguistic, psychological, and social factors of the impact of emotions on language learning. In sum, affective processes in pedagogical domains have been investigated in more depth (C. J. White 2018). Plus, emotions in language learning and teaching have also been recognized as being a crucial factor for more sociolinguistic issues such as the role of power relations and identity (Benesch 2012).

One of the main reasons for why emotions and attitudes have been recognized as crucial for any kind of language pedagogy is that emotions and subjective evaluation

¹Although it is of course open for discussion whether, and if so, to what extent theories about language cognition can really contribute to concepts for language teaching, see L. White (2023) for a critical recent review.

are at the core of motivations for language learning (and for learning more generally). Accordingly, so-called ‘affective learning strategies’ have become crucial in the language learning literature, “involving taking control of the emotional (affective) conditions and experiences that shape one’s subjective involvement in learning” (Dörnyei 2005: 169) – the conditions and experiences spanning from negative emotions such as anxiety (MacIntyre 2017) to emotions and attitudes prominent in the field of positive psychology (see MacIntyre & Gregersen 2012 for an overview and MacIntyre & Vincze 2017 for an empirical study).

These contributions to the affective turn concern emotions and attitudes towards all kinds of factors involved in the teaching and learning of languages (e.g., the approach and motivation of the teacher, the classroom setting, the level of proficiency of the learner, etc.). Given the recent focus of pedagogical linguistics on pre-university classrooms and teacher training (see literature cited above), the following two sections provide a narrower discussion and will zoom in on attitudes of student teachers that can be found towards two central concepts in pedagogical linguistics: the notion of grammar (Section 29.2.1) and the concept of multilingualism and a comparative approach to language structure (Section 29.2.2). These studies on attitudes provide an instructive picture of existing affective beliefs that, in a second step, could then be taken into account by teachers – but in very different ways, depending on the specific content of their (language) classes. Specifically, there are various reasons for why teachers could check – and then potentially help to ‘linguistalize’ – the students’ affective beliefs about grammar and prominent linguistic topics such as multilingualism. For instance, the goal might be to improve the students’ reading and writing skills (Marjokorpi & Van Rijt 2024) or, at a more general conceptual level, to think and reason scientifically (Honda & O’Neil 2007). Since all those research branches feature quite different contents and methodologies, I restrict the following discussion to affective beliefs that exist on the part of the students irrespective of any previous or subsequent linguistic and scientific intervention. I start with looking at some recent studies on attitudes towards grammar.

29.2.1 Affective beliefs about grammar

This section briefly summarizes some recent findings about what kind of attitudes student teachers have towards the core linguistic concept of grammar. In this context, the more general concept discussed in the relevant literature is the teachers’ ‘beliefs’ about linguistic notions such as grammar (see Van Rijt, Wijnands & Coppen 2019, Elsner 2021, Wijnands, van Rijt & Coppen 2022 on the concept of beliefs of both teachers and student teachers). This area is an important strand of pedagogical linguistics because beliefs can potentially affect language pedagogies (Borg 2003, Phipps & Borg 2009, Giovanelli 2015, Watson 2015b) as well as teaching practices more generally. Crucially, many of those beliefs can be characterized as affective and evaluative. Specifically, in a general teaching perspective Nespør in his seminal work has pointed out that

[b]elief systems can be said to rely much more heavily on affective and evaluative components than knowledge systems. In some respects, feelings, moods, and subjective evaluations based on personal preferences seem to operate

more or less independently of other forms of cognition typically associated with knowledge systems [...] (Nespor 1987: 319)

Accordingly, aspects of language evoke certain beliefs in student teachers, and those beliefs are significantly shaped by affects, feelings, and subjective evaluation – and there is of course an important distinction between what student teachers know about a particular domain such as grammar ('knowledge systems' in the quote above), and what they believe about that domain. However, Watson (2015a) has highlighted that there are not only affective and evaluative beliefs, but also 'conceptual' beliefs that concern "what teachers believe grammar teaching 'is'" (Watson 2015a: 2). Since this section focuses on affective and evaluative beliefs (i.e., attitudes and subjective evaluations towards grammar), I will only mention conceptual beliefs to the extent that they interact with the affective and evaluative domain of beliefs. I will also restrict the discussion to a particular teaching setting, namely to L1 language classrooms. In Section 29.3 below, where I will sketch some of the learning challenges of expressive language in pedagogical linguistics, my focus will then be on L2 language contexts.

When we look at empirical studies about how core aspects of language evoke affective beliefs in student teachers and how for instance grammar and grammar teaching is thus evaluated by those student teachers in L1 language classrooms, we have to take into account that there is of course a lot of variation regarding particular language policies and curricula in the respective countries. In what follows, I would like to summarize two representative recent studies in the European context, one on attitudes towards grammar in Norway, and the other on such attitudes in Germany. Although the two studies thus deal with different national contexts and populations, they can be compared nicely because they raise very similar questions about grammar, and both investigate the beliefs of student teachers. Let us start with the study in the Norwegian context.

Nygård & Brøseth (2021) have conducted a large-scale study with 235 first-year student teachers in Norway. The study was carried out in form of a survey that allowed the student teachers to provide individual answers to several questions about their subjective confidence and attitudes towards grammar. Two questions are interesting in the context of our discussion (Nygård & Brøseth 2021: 136-137):

Q1: Do you think grammar is an important part of Norwegian as a school subject?

Q2: Do you feel confident in grammar?

To categorize the individual answers to those questions, Nygård & Brøseth (2021) employed a qualitative content analysis, and they came up with the following major categories to identify evaluations of the importance of grammar and subjective confidence in grammar across subjects for Q1 and Q2, respectively (Nygård & Brøseth 2021: 139-143):

Q1: (i) very important	(iii) not so important
(ii) important/quite important	(iv) unclear answer

- Q2: (i) yes (iv) no
 (ii) quite confident (v) don't know
 (iii) ok/average (vi) unclear

The results of their study can be briefly summarized as follows. Regarding Q₁, almost all student teachers evaluate grammar as being very important or at least important/quite important (48.9% and 47.6%, respectively; Nygård & Brøseth 2021: 141). Here are some original examples produced by student teachers in this study (Nygård & Brøseth 2021: 141):

- (1) a. "Grammar is very important in the Norwegian subject. This is because the text will be better to read with correct grammar". (S7)
 b. "I think grammar is an important topic in the Norwegian subject, since writing is a crucial skill in life". (S221)

Crucially, only two out of 235 students evaluated grammar as not so important. Here are their statements (Nygård & Brøseth 2021: 142), illustrating rather negative affective beliefs such as 'grammar will spoil sb's enjoyment' and 'grammar is a waste of time'.

- (2) a. "I don't think grammar is the main topic in the Norwegian subject, but it's very useful anyway. I believe that too much focus on grammar can have negative consequences for the pupils' joy of writing" (S5)
 b. "I think it often develops naturally if one reads and/or writes a lot. I associate grammar tasks with rote learning, and therefore I think that it is a bit of wasted *use* of time. But it depends on which kind of grammar we are talking about. Learning about word classes, for instance, is not so important, I think" (S144)

The last statement in (2b) already indicates that evaluation and attitudes towards grammar of course depend on what student teachers think grammar actually is. We will come back to this point below. The results for the responses to Q₂ (subjective confidence in grammar) can be briefly summarized as follows: 73% of the 235 student teachers believe that they are ok or better in grammar, so their confidence is rather high (yes/19%; quite competent/16%; ok, average/38%; not very competent/11%; no/8%; don't know/1%; unclear/7%; Nygård & Brøseth 2021: 143).

All in all, according to this study, student teachers in Norway have thus rather positive affective beliefs about grammar – both regarding its status/importance and regarding how they feel about their capabilities in that domain (their subjective confidence). Let us now look at a similar study on attitudes towards grammar in Germany.

In a large-scale survey project, Döring (2020) conducted questionnaire studies to explore affective and evaluative beliefs about grammar of student teachers in Germany. In a study involving 352 student teachers from different universities all across Germany, participants had to rate relevant statements about grammar on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 'I fully agree with the statement' to 'I totally disagree with the statement'. The first statements were about grammar more generally and how student teachers feel about it (Döring 2020: 94), and the second set of questions was about how they evaluate grammar

as a subject in German schools more specifically (Döring 2020: 95):

- (3) **Grammar, more generally**
- a. I am very interested in grammar.
 - b. I would like to have more grammar at university.
 - c. I find grammar complicated.
 - d. I feel insecure that there is often no right and wrong in grammar.
- (4) **Grammar in German school curricula**
- a. word classes, constituents very important
 - b. grammar from school useful for university
 - c. more grammar at school
 - d. not more time than necessary for grammar
 - e. grammar up to high school level
 - f. grammar from university for school
 - g. grammar in the curriculum out of habit
 - h. lectures about grammar of other languages

Without going into the detailed numbers (see Döring 2020: 94-96), the results can be summarized as follows. As for the statements in (3), most of the student teachers have rather positive affective beliefs about grammar (i.e., they are rather interested in the topic and prefer more grammar at the university). Plus, they evaluate grammar as only moderately complicated and do not feel insecure about the absence of a binary distinction between right and wrong in grammar. The results for the statements in (4) reported by Döring (2020) indicate a rather positive attitude towards grammar as well. For instance, student teachers agree that word classes and constituent analysis are very important in the language classroom at school, and overall they want to see more grammar at school and up to high school level. They also do not think that grammar is only part of the curriculum out of habit. In sum, the responses to both sets of statements in (3) and (4) suggest that student teachers across different German universities have unambiguously positive affective beliefs about the notion of grammar.

This is in sharp contrast to the results of an additional free production study presented by Döring (2020). In particular, she conducted a completion task with a different population of student teachers where students should provide (i) free affective associations with grammar lessons (ii) and, additionally, complete the statement *Pupils find grammar lessons...*The latter task was thus about finding out how student teachers think that their future students feel about grammar lessons. In short, this study yielded a lot of evaluative predicates associated with grammar lessons that express rather negative emotions and attitudes. Among the most frequent answers were *trocken* ('dry/boring'), *langweilig*, *öde* ('dull/boring'), *kompliziert* ('complicated'), and *unübersichtlich* ('confusing'). Interestingly, student teachers provided more or less the same evaluative predicates for both completion tasks (i) and (ii), thereby expressing that they think their future students hold the same attitudes towards grammar as they do.

While most of the predicates are thus clearly expressing negative affective beliefs about grammar lessons in the classroom, Döring (2020: 98) rightly points out that predi-

cates such as *kompliziert* ('complicated') do not necessarily mean that one has a negative emotion towards a subject. In particular, the same might hold for mathematics, where the common belief is that it is rather complicated, but on the basis of that belief mathematics is typically not judged as negative in our society. This points to an issue that I have already mentioned in the context of the Norwegian study above.

In particular, the subject of grammar might seem complicated and confusing (*unübersichtlich*, see above) to many student teachers because they do not know what grammar exactly is. This has become clear in some of the more explicit statements from Norwegian students about that confusion (2b), but it is also evidenced by the fact that many participants of the Norwegian study conceptualize grammar as being only about writing texts correctly; see (1a), (1b), and (2a). In the case of Nygård & Brøseth's (2021) study, this has led to mostly positive affective beliefs about grammar because their participants regarded the skill of producing written texts in a correct way as rather valuable. Here we might see a case how the 'conceptual belief' (i.e., what grammar is; Watson 2015a) crucially interacts with the affective and evaluative beliefs. However, this prescriptive notion of grammar (correct writing) might also be the reason for why the evaluative predicates in Döring's (2020) free association task were mostly expressing negative emotions. Döring (2020) asked about evaluation of 'grammar lessons' at school (and not about the subject of grammar per se), which is a notoriously prescriptive – and for many therefore quite boring – context.

All in all, we have seen how affective beliefs of student teachers about grammar have recently been investigated empirically. I have highlighted that those studies differ in several respects, but their common finding is that when asked about the importance of grammar as a subject, the majority of student teachers from both Norway and Germany express positive affective beliefs. However, at the same time some of the results indicate that student teachers probably have a totally different notion of grammar than those working in linguistics (and thus most of their university teachers). In the following section, I will turn to evaluative attitudes towards another prominent notion in pedagogical linguistics, namely multilingualism. Let us look at the details.

29.2.2 Affective beliefs about multilingualism and comparing languages

A growing number of children all over the world are being raised with bilingual or multilingual backgrounds, entering school and participating in language classes with their diverse language systems and competencies. Within the language sciences, it has long been noted that it is crucial to recognize that these children bring with them a multicompetence that goes beyond simply having multiple languages coexisting; it represents a cognitive ability in itself in the sense of plurilingualism (Piccardo, Germain-Rutherford & Lawrence 2022). This multicompetence enables individuals to creatively and dynamically utilize and develop their linguistic skills. Additionally, from a linguistic point of view, it is important to highlight that cross-linguistic influences and various stages of language development need not be viewed as errors. Instead, they can be examined as linguistic phenomena and stages of development that tell us a lot about our theories of grammar and language acquisition. All in all, those are all crucial aspects of the 'multilingual turn'

in language classrooms and so-called translanguaging in language education more generally (MacSwan 2017, Wei & García 2022).

Viewing this multilingual turn from the perspective of pedagogical linguistics, we first observe that modern language classrooms are thus characterized by diverse and multilingual backgrounds of students, but at the same time more traditional teaching methods such as the audio-lingual and grammar-translation approaches are still persisting. In particular, many of those traditional methods typically assume homogeneous linguistic groups in the classroom (like English native speakers learning French or Spanish in the UK). However, the reality of multilingualism and dynamic language diversity in classrooms demands a shift in teaching strategies. In the context of pedagogical linguistics, Widdowson (2020: 40-41) has therefore proposed that focus-on-form within pedagogical linguistics should always be a cross-linguistic enterprise:

Teaching has failed, I would argue, because it is fixated on the objective of teaching competence in a **particular language** with relative disregard of the natural process of learning **language**. [...] An alternative pedagogy would define the subject as teaching language, not teaching a language, which would mean that teaching would accommodate to learning and not the other way round, and defining the pedagogic objective in reference to the learning process as the development of the capability for languaging.

In what follows, I will briefly summarize a recent empirical survey by Trotzke (2023) that investigated both the evaluative attitudes of German student teachers towards multilingualism and their feelings about their capabilities in teaching in a cross-linguistic perspective and hence their capability of fostering the ‘capability of languaging’ highlighted by Widdowson (2020) for pedagogical linguistics above. All participating student teachers were enrolled at a German university, with the goal of becoming teachers in L1 language classrooms in the German school system (see Trotzke 2023 for details).

The survey was presented online and contained two sets of statements. The first group of statements was about the student teachers’ attitudes towards multilingualism in general, and the second group of statements targeted the student teachers’ subjective confidence about addressing multilingualism in their classroom by means of language comparisons and cross-linguistic tools (see Leist-Villis 2017 for the relevant catalogue of statements used in this study). Participants had to rate 16 statements in total, and they were provided with a 5-point Likert scale (from ‘1’/‘is not accurate at all’ to ‘5’/‘absolutely accurate’). Here are relevant examples for each statement type (Trotzke 2023: e160):

- (5) a. **ATTITUDE/POSITIVE**
Sprachmischungen sind Zeichen für den lebendigen und kreativen Umgang mit zwei oder mehr Sprachen.
 ‘Mixing languages is a sign for a dynamic and creative approach to dealing with two or more languages.’
- b. **ATTITUDE/NEGATIVE**
Die Schülerinnen und Schüler sollten ihre Lernzeit dazu nutzen, gutes Deutsch zu lernen – und nicht auch noch ihre Familiensprache.

- ‘Students should use their time to learn proper German – and not waste any time on non-German home languages.’
- (6) a. **CONFIDENCE/POSITIVE**
Ich denke, dass ich das nötige Vokabular habe, um mehrere Sprachen im Schulalltag zu thematisieren.
 ‘I think my knowledge of relevant terms and concepts is enough to discuss multiple languages in everyday school life.’
- b. **CONFIDENCE/NEGATIVE**
Ich fühle mich nicht ausreichend vorbereitet, um eine andere Sprache außer Deutsch im Unterricht zu thematisieren.
 ‘I don’t feel equipped to discuss any other language than German in my classes.’

The results of this empirical survey can be summarized as follows (see [Trotzke 2023: e161](#) for details and statistics). The student teachers overall have a strongly positive attitude towards multilingualism. However, they do not feel confident about teaching in a multilingual classroom because they feel rather unsure whether they possess the necessary linguistic knowledge to do so. Interestingly, [Trotzke \(2023\)](#) conducted a separate questionnaire study on their actual competence with the same group of teacher students who, however, were unaware that the two studies were connected. In particular, the separate study was modelled along the lines of [Van Rijt et al.’s \(2021, 2022\)](#) test of grammatical understanding (TGU), and the items of the TGU used by [Trotzke \(2023\)](#) only targeted linguistic competencies relevant for cross-linguistic comparisons and reflections in the classroom (see [Van Rijt 2020: Chapter 6](#) for general methodological aspects of the TGU, including a comprehensive discussion of the notion of ‘understanding’). In short, the student teachers’ performance on those components of the TGU was rather good (see [Trotzke 2023: e162-e163](#)), meaning that there is a notable gap between their affective beliefs about their competencies (their ‘subjective confidence’ mentioned above) and their actual capabilities (their ‘knowledge systems’ as opposed to affective beliefs, see [Section 29.2.1](#) above).

In sum, findings like [Trotzke’s \(2023\)](#) results indicate that in the domain of affective and evaluative beliefs student teachers have rather positive affective beliefs about multilingualism. However, they do not feel confident about addressing multilingualism in the classroom by means of linguistics – and, interestingly, in this domain we thus find a mismatch between affective and evaluative beliefs and actual ‘knowledge systems’, in [Nespor’s \(1987\)](#) words (cited in [Section 29.2.1](#) above). Specifically, student teachers might be well trained in linguistic concepts that are relevant for addressing cross-linguistic patterns of language, but they often are not aware that exactly those capabilities might be relevant for the teaching setting of multilingualism. This might be due to a prescriptive conception of grammar and linguistics as a whole ([Section 29.2.1](#)), suggesting that affective beliefs about linguistic concepts such as grammar and multilingualism are a crucial component of exploring and ultimately improving teaching languages in L1 classrooms within the field of pedagogical linguistics. With those results in mind, I now turn to the more specific topic of learning challenges posed by expressive language in non-native

acquisition and learning contexts.

29.3 EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE AND PEDAGOGICAL LINGUISTICS

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In the previous section, I have indicated the importance of affective beliefs in pedagogical linguistics, thereby illustrating how affects and emotions in general have become such a prominent topic in the language learning and teaching sciences as part of the ‘affective’ or ‘emotional turn’ in applied linguistics. After we have thus looked at *how* affects and emotions play a role in language education, we now turn to the *what* and focus on expressive language in language learning. Specifically, Section 29.3.1 will first sketch the most prominent research in this domain, which is on the learning challenges of emotional vocabulary and swearwords in particular. Given this discussion, I will then go beyond that domain and turn to a broader class of phenomena that display similar learning challenges and have been investigated in the pedagogical strands of second language pragmatics.

29.3.1 Emotional vocabulary: learning challenges

A lively research area in the psychology of language and cognitive sciences more generally is the investigation of the processing and acquisition of the so-called emotional lexicon (see Bock & Klinger 1986, Altarriba & Bauer 2004 for seminal work and Wilck & Altarriba 2022 for a recent overview). In what follows, I will focus on non-native learning and acquisition contexts of the emotional lexicon. In the domain of the emotional lexicon in late bilinguals, Pavlenko (2008) has formulated a fundamental distinction between emotion words and emotion-laden words:

EMOTION WORDS are seen as words that directly refer to particular affective states (“happy”, “angry”) or processes (“to worry”, “to rage”), and function to either describe (“she is sad”) or express them (“I feel sad”). [...] EMOTION-LADEN WORDS are seen here as words that do not refer to emotions directly but instead express (“jerk”, “loser”) or elicit emotions from the interlocutors (“cancer”, “malignancy”). (Pavlenko 2008: 148)

This is reminiscent of a similar distinction formulated by Foolen (2012, 2016) between the ‘conceptualization’ of emotions (emotion words) and the ‘expression’ of emotions (emotion-laden words); see also → *Expressivity and the lexicon* by MICHAEL ADAMS, Chapter 7 of this volume. Since this chapter is about expressivity and pedagogical linguistics, I will present a case study on emotion-laden words below (i.e., on the expression and not the description of emotions). However, there are some more general features relevant for first versus second language learners that both classes of words share with each other.

In particular, research in the early 2000s has shown for both emotion and emotion-laden words that they are processed differently from other abstract and concrete words in the mental lexicon of first language learners. Specifically, Altarriba (2003) summarizes:

[...] in a first language, those words are stored at a deeper level of representation than their second language counterparts [...]. The contexts in which they appear help to create multiple traces in memory for these words and strengthen their semantic representation. (Altarriba 2003: 310)

Based on similar findings and conclusions, Pavlenko (2012: 412) has suggested that patterns like the ones sketched in the quote above “may be grounded in embodied perception of language emotionality” in L1 acquisition in contrast to acquisition processes in additional languages. In other words, language users are able to process emotional language faster in their language(s) acquired early in life also because they have first experienced the relevant emotions through that language, and thus those emotions also feel more powerful and authentic (see Dewaele 2013 and Pavlenko 2005 for two book-length studies on those aspects).

By contrast, a pedagogical context such as the language classroom is a decontextualized setting, which “does not provide many opportunities for integration of all sensory modalities and verbal conditioning [...] and thus leads to development of ‘disembodied’ words” (Pavlenko 2012: 421). Given this difference, many have argued that processing of emotional vocabulary is automatic in L1 contexts, but semantic (i.e., in parallel to ‘neutral’ words) in other contexts.² Given this general background about the processing and perception of expressive language in native vs. non-native settings, I would now like to zoom in on the learning challenges in a particular domain of expressive language that concerns emotion-laden words such as swearwords.

On the basis of the central assumption that both the expression and the conceptualization of emotions are highly language-dependent, Dewaele & Pavlenko (2001–2003) in a multi-year effort have created the Bilingualism and Emotion Questionnaire, which has gathered data in the form of self-reports from more than 1,500 multilinguals from all over the world regarding their preferences as to how (including in which language) they express different types of emotions. One general finding was that particularly L1 swearwords were judged as more powerful than swearwords in additional non-dominant languages. Given this finding, Dewaele (2016b) has extracted 30 negative emotion-laden words from the British National Corpus, which are listed below in their relevant context in bold (Dewaele 2016b: 118):

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (7) | That is daft! | He’s stupid! |
| | Bollocks! | He’s a wacko! |
| | Bugger! | She’s so silly! |
| | Damn , look what he’s done! | He’s so weird! |
| | Fucking hell! | He’s such a comedian! |
| | Has he lost his mind? | He’s such a wanker! |
| | He’s a bit of a fool. | He’s thick! |
| | He’s a little maniac! | She’s bonkers! |

²However, there are a lot of relevant distinctions in the literature, one being that only words expressing negative emotions are processed analogous to neutral words, but not words conveying positive emotions (e.g., Sheikh & Titone 2016). Be that as it may, it is fair to say that expressivity in a language other than the native language features some unique acquisition and processing aspects.

She's such a bitch!	What a jerk!
She's such a lunatic!	What a moron!
She's such a slut!	What a nutter!
Shit!	What an idiot!
He's such an arsehole!	What a bastard!
What a cunt!	He's a prick!
What a fruitcake!	She's such a loser!

The list makes clear that the notion of negative emotion-laden words was broadly defined by also including more complex expressions such as *lost his mind* in a question. The list also indicates that the degree of offensiveness varies across items used in this study (from mild expressions such as *fruitcake* to extremely offensive items such as *prick* or *cunt*). Some of the words appeared in the context of a sentence.

Based on this list, Dewaele (2016b) asked more than 2,300 participants about the exact meaning of the individual items, and they additionally had to rate the offensiveness and the frequency of use of those items; half of the participants were English L1 speakers, the other half had another L1 than English. The results of his study can be summarized as follows. Rather expectedly, the data indicate a significantly higher level of understanding of the meaning of the items for L1 speakers and also a higher frequency of use for the highly offensive items. The results regarding the degree of offensiveness more specifically, though, were more surprising. In particular, non-native speakers did not underestimate offensiveness as compared to the judgments by L1 speakers; rather, they overestimated the offensiveness of 29 out of the 30 items from the list in (7) above. The only exception was the extremely offensive item *cunt*, where non-native speakers significantly underestimated its offensiveness when compared to the ratings of L1 speakers.

Interestingly, Dewaele (2016b: 123) provides the following explanation for the overestimation of offensiveness of 29 out of 30 words by non-native language users:

[...] These words may not have been explained as openly as non-emotional words during English FL classes. Indeed, non-emotional words are “safe” for teachers whereas emotional words, especially vernacular, offensive words and insults are “dangerous”, and typically avoided in the curriculum [...] Teachers who did mention them may have attached a metaphorical “red flag” to them, reminding users of the potentially explosive content.

In other words, the lack of teaching expressive language in pedagogical contexts might have led to an underuse of this language and the relevant words. As a consequence, non-native language users do not get helpful and authentic situational feedback because they rather refrain from using those red-flag items at all. Given that especially swearing is a highly social in-group activity important for aspects of belonging and identity (see Dewaele 2013), non-native language learners might miss a crucial component of language proficiency because without such feedback and pedagogical treatment of expressive language they might never learn the socio-pragmatic rules of using that language. In the next section, I will briefly sketch how this learning challenge (essentially resulting in issues of intercultural understanding) extends to further domains of expressive language that go beyond swearwords and other types of emotional vocabulary.

29.3.2 Beyond emotional vocabulary

In an overview article, Dewaele (2016a: 463) states that “the learning of multiple languages, and the resulting multi-competence, affects not just phonology, morphology, syntax, lexical choices, but also pragmatics, where the communication of emotion is situated.” In other words, exploring the connection between expressivity and pedagogical linguistics brings us to the field of second language pragmatics because, according to Dewaele (2016a), this is the domain where we also find the communication of emotions via language.

A central concept in the study of second language pragmatics is the notion of pragmatic failure, which goes back to Thomas (1983). In the context of pedagogical linguistics, Bardovi-Harlig (2020: 44) has characterized pragmatic failures as situations where “the use of an interlanguage form may not lead to a grammatical error but rather to bad feelings or a negative evaluation of the speaker as a person.” In other words, there is grammaticality and grammatical errors, and there is the domain of pragmatic failures, which can be considered equally important because failing in that domain can have even more negative consequences for the perception of the language user by its peers. We have seen above in Section 29.3.1 that learners are not very good at assessing the offensiveness and thus the pragmatic impact of typical cases of expressive language such as swearwords. We might thus say that this domain is prone to misunderstanding and misuse and hence to pragmatic failures. We have also indicated that this might be due to the lack of teaching of expressive items in the language classroom. In what follows, I will briefly illustrate that those observations might hold for a broader class of phenomena, indicating that the learning challenges of expressive language can also be understood as the learning challenges of use-conditional (i.e., non-truth-conditional) items more generally (→ *Expressivity and multidimensional semantics* by DANIEL GUTZMANN, Chapter 11 of this volume).

In a recent study, Trotzke, Bidese & Moroni (2020) have investigated production patterns of L1 Italian learners of L2 German in the domain of discourse particles – a prime example of use-conditional items (Gutzmann 2015). Specifically, the Italian learners had to complete a production test targeting both the pragmatic felicity of specific particles in a given discourse and their syntactic positioning. The study was based on corpus data showing that overall L1 Italian learners refrain from producing discourse particles, similarly to the findings mentioned above for expressive items such as swearwords (Section 29.3.1). Accordingly, the question was whether the lack of particles in the speech of L2 learners of German is due to the challenges of syntactic positioning or due to challenges in the domain of pragmatic meaning.

In the interest of space, I will not provide the details of the design of this study (Trotzke, Bidese & Moroni 2020: 191-196), but only summarize the main results. First, the study clearly showed that the learning challenges for discourse particles are pragmatic and not syntactic. In other words, participants’ performance on the placement of the different particles was rather good, but their performance level in choosing the appropriate particle depending on different discourse contexts was significantly low.

However, Trotzke, Bidese & Moroni (2020) also found an interesting distinction that is relevant in the context of our discussion in this article. Specifically, in their study they counterbalanced sentence types, and it turned out that learners had significantly less

problems with the pragmatics of particles in declaratives than with particles in other sentence types (i.e., interrogatives and imperatives). This observation is relevant for our discussion because there is well-known distinction in the inventory of German particles. Particles in declaratives (at least the most famous ones tested in the empirical study by [Trotzke, Bidese & Moroni 2020](#)) refer to epistemic or information-structural distinctions: the information *p* conveyed by the declarative is either topical/already known (*ja* ‘yes’), new (at least to the hearer; *doch* ‘but’), or the speaker is in an epistemic state where she can only guess whether *p* holds true (*wohl* ‘well’).

- (8) *Er hat das Buch {ja, doch, wohl} ausgeliehen.*
 he has the book PRT PRT PRT borrowed
 ‘He has PRT borrowed the book.’

However, the particles tested in non-declarative environments where learners had more problems with their pragmatic meaning concern a different domain. For instance, [Trotzke, Bidese & Moroni \(2020\)](#) tested particles such as *bloß* (‘only’) in imperatives (9) and *nur* (‘only’) in *wh*-interrogatives (10):

- (9) *Kauf bloß das Buch!*
 buy PRT the book
 ‘Do you hear me? You shall buy the book!’
- (10) *Wer hat nur das Buch ausgeliehen?*
 who has PRT the book borrowed
 ‘Who on earth has borrowed the book?’

(9) illustrates that a command containing the particle element *bloß* conveys a sense of the speaker’s heightened emotion and feeling of urgency towards performing the relevant action asked for. This is why this particle is often used in threats. In (10), the translation ‘Who on earth’ already makes it clear that the particle *nur* in *wh*-questions is used for conveying that a speaker is desperately searching for an answer, and by adding this kind of emotion to the question those utterances often express strong frustration on the part of the speaker (see [Dörre & Trotzke 2019](#) for detailed semantics).

All in all, this additional finding about the distribution of learning challenges in the domain of discourse particles suggests that although the learning challenges overall are due to the pragmatics of the particles (and not due to their syntax), there is also a degree of difficulty, ranging from elements that express epistemic states only to elements that are clearly emotional. We thus arrive at a more fine-grained picture of the learning challenges in this domain of expressive language.

The explicit teaching of expressive language is rare and the poor treatment in relevant pedagogical textbooks is well known (see [Dewaele 2016b](#) for swearwords and [Trotzke, Bidese & Moroni 2020](#) for observations regarding teaching materials for particles). It has been shown that metapragmatic information (e.g., use conditions for pragmatically marked word orders in individual languages, how to use intonation for pragmatic purposes, etc.) can be compared to the topic of teaching grammar to the extent that the underlying use conditions cannot be properly verbalized by native speakers either ([Taguchi](#)

2015). This indicates that metapragmatic statements are part of the implicit and abstract knowledge that native speakers possess, and if we consider expressivity an important aspect of language education, then it should certainly surface more prominently in our teaching materials and in the discipline of pedagogical linguistics more generally.

29.4 CONCLUSION

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This chapter has presented some major aspects of how expressivity is connected to the field of pedagogical linguistics at different levels in the domains of both L1 language classroom teaching and L2 language acquisition and multilingualism. Specifically, I have first focused on the so-called ‘affective turn’ in applied linguistics and illustrated for student teachers in L1 classrooms what kind of affective beliefs are typically evoked by central components of language teaching such as grammar and grammar lessons (Section 29.2.1) and multilingualism and comparing languages (Section 29.2.2). The empirical studies sketched in this context show that overall student teachers express positive affective beliefs about those language teaching components, but they also very often entertain a totally different notion of those components than those working in linguistics (and thus most of their university teachers). I have concluded that this in some domains results in a mismatch between affective beliefs and actual knowledge systems.

Given this overview of the interplay between affective beliefs and pedagogical linguistics concepts, the chapter has then focused on learning challenges posed by key examples of expressive language. In particular, I have first sketched prominent investigations into learning challenges of emotional vocabulary and swearwords in particular (Section 29.3.1). The empirical work in the domain of L2 acquisition suggests that learners not only process and acquire expressive language differently from L1 speakers – they might also apply very different use conditions to relevant items such as swearwords. The discussion has made clear that one major reason for this learning challenge (and, ultimately, learning issue) might be the poor treatment of expressive language in pedagogical contexts. Based on this conclusion, I have illustrated to what extent this learning challenge extends to further domains of expressive language such as the use-conditional class of discourse particles in languages like German (Section 29.3.2).

In sum, the discussion about expressive language and learning challenges points to the pedagogical desideratum that the socio-pragmatic rules of using expressive language – and for avoiding pragmatic failure – should be part of our language pedagogies to a much larger extent, given that it is well known that many domains of L2 pragmatics can be learned from explicit instruction and that some instruction is superior to no instruction (see Culpeper, Mackey & Taguchi 2018 for a general overview and Pérez-Hernández 2020 for a teaching application to the specific pragmatic domain of speech acts). Since our language pedagogies are also heavily shaped by our beliefs about particular teaching domains (Section 29.2), any approach to how we teach expressivity in the language classroom should also be accompanied by empirical explorations into the affective beliefs at play when dealing with the topic of expressive language, and how those affective beliefs

are in accordance or mismatch the actual competencies of language users – be it students, student teachers, or teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I thank two reviewers for their valuable and helpful comments. Of course, I'm solely responsible for the way I have handled their comments. My thanks also to the two editors of this handbook for their careful and great work.

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