

## What Language Should I Say \*\*\*\*\* in Today?

As human beings we tend to express our emotions in a variety of ways but the one trait that we all have in common is expressing our feelings verbally. "Say what you need to say." This statement sums up what most of us want to express but what happens when you take other languages and emotion into consideration. L2 learners are taught what native speakers may see as the basic foundations of English that everybody has to learn in order to achieve their second language. The end goal for most L2 learners is to use what they obtained and use it in the real world. Unfortunately there are always going to be certain concepts that teachers won't teach due to it being "taboo". Slang and swear words are a good set of examples that should be taught to students so they have a better understanding as to why native speakers choose to use those words. Therefore this research will go into depth about the connection between the psychological and linguistics that language learners will experience when it comes to expressing their emotions.

Jean-Marc Dewaele is a professor at University of London, Birkbeck that teaches applied linguistics and multilingualism. Some of his research includes multilingualism, multiculturalism and psychological aspects of second/foreign language acquisition. With these credentials he has written a number of articles comparing the relationship between expressing emotions in multiple languages. Derived from Aneta Pavlenko's "Bilingual Minds: Emotional Experience, Expression, and Representation." Dewaele mentions his own personal experience with emotions, particularly anger. When he was caught in a situation where he couldn't board his flight due to a number error he went up to the boarding counter asking questions in Spanish. Due to the fact that he couldn't express his anger in Spanish he switched to English, although English was his L3 he felt

that switching to English was a better way to express his feeling other than Spanish. After realizing what just happened he began to ask himself as to why he preferred speaking his L3. A number of factors went into account as to why he decided to code switch.

A main factor that was the result of this code switching was the idea that he lacked anger in Spanish. In other words he wasn't able to express or use words in order to define how upset he was. "I lacked the fluency needed to gain the upper hand." (Dewaele, 2004) To truly express the emotion you want to portray, first you must be sure of yourself (Dewaele, 2004) If you lack the confidence in speaking in an L2 then you may begin to lose a sense of how you may want to speak. Dewaele wanted something done about his flight being cancelled but if what you want to say doesn't come out the way you want it to be then nobody will take you seriously. Therefore by switching to a language that you are more confident will have better results in the long run and the point you want to get across will be much easier to explain than having to search for words.

A good example of how the language you are most comfortable with will dominate in certain situations. Nancy Huston is a Anglo-Canadian born author that moved to French as a young adult, even though she is a native speaker of English she has written more books in French than English.

"Every false bilingual must have a specific map of lexical asymmetry, in my case it is in French that I feel at ease in an intellectual conversation, in an interview, in a colloquim, in any linguistic situation that draws on concepts and categories learned in adulthood. On

the other hand, if I want to be mad, let myself go, swear, sing, yell, be moved by the pure pleasure of speech, it is in English that I do it” (Huston. 1999.)

As you can see for both Dewaele and Huston, they learned Spanish and French later on in their years their first language still have a personal attachment to them, in this case Huston feels when it comes to expressing emotion it is better said and done in English, while French is her chosen language when it comes to intelligence. The connection multilinguals and even L2 learners have with a language may help them strive and better understand how language works from a pragmatic point of view.

Before I go into the depth between linguistics and psychology let’s start from the beginning. Code-switching is the idea of switching between different languages, especially during a conversation. Bilingual speakers may code-switch between languages because one language may not be as expressive as the other. Taking the theory of code switching and intertwining it with the concept of sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic is a better explanation as to why L2 or multilingual speakers have a better connection to one language versus another. Also another way of looking at it can be that one culture is affiliated with one type of emotion while another can be tied in with the opposite. A study was by Dewaele and Pavlenko with this idea in mind which will be looked at later on in this research paper, asking the researchers to assess the pragmatic competence multilingual speakers may face. First let’s start off with the basic goals of a language learner.

The goal that almost all language learners want to achieve is the ability to fit in the community of the language they are learning. Teachers do their best to prepare their students to

face the real world but what happens when it comes down to what they didn't learn in the classroom or from the textbooks? Being able to understand the use of ST-words (Swearwords and taboo words) is looked down upon in a classroom setting yet in order to fit in a all language learners should have some sort of sociopragmatic competence as well. Unfortunately understanding how ST-words is limited and is usually influenced by outside resources including media which essentially may or may not lead to some consequence due to the lack of knowledge. A good example of the lack of sociopragmatic with ST-words in another language can backfire comes Dewaele, whose L4 is Spanish. Throughout a discussion with his native Spanish speaking students the term "joder" was used a number of times but when Dewaele tried to use it his students told him that he should avoid saying it because it sounded funny coming from him. As you can see in this case it's almost inappropriate to use that term since it was coming from an L2 user.

Based on personal experience, being a multilingual speaker I've caught myself using one or more languages in order to fulfill the emotion I was trying to get across. When I travel I try to use that countries native language in order to blend in with everybody else. By doing so I'm able to immerse myself in the language so my linguistic skills can improve. Not only will this language connection make me feel as if I'm part of the group but nobody would judge me from "attempting" to speak their language if they knew it was actually my L2. There have been moments when I would use my L1 in order to express myself in a much more confident tone. For example, "shit" can be used in many different ways. It's a term that can be used as a description and also an emotion. Since swearing is more of a spontaneous outburst or speech routine (Dewaele. 2004) saying "shit" is the first thing that will come out without much thought. If I were

to say the direct translation in either Japanese or Korean, I would most likely get odd stares because the way I was attempting to use it makes absolutely no sense in that language, resulting in me being “lost in translation.” Swearing in this case, sounds a lot more expressive in English than any other language that I know of.

I could be having a conversation with someone in my L2 but randomly I will add in slang words in English because not only does it achieve what I’m trying to say but it expresses what I’m trying to say as well. Another way of looking at it is one language may have a better connection to emotional words than the other. Research done by Anooshian & Hertel (1994) show that

“bilinguals who acquired their second language after the age of 8, recall emotional words more frequently than neutral words following their presentation in the L1. Hence the authors conclusion that language of presentation, which is generally irrelevant to the processing of meaning in most contexts, has a significant effect on recall of emotional words.” (pg. 89)

This could be an explanation as to why emotional words in English have a better connection internally even though I learned my other languages before the age of 8. One conclusion that I’ve come up with is that between speaking Japanese and Korean, Japanese is probably the one that I have never really had an emotional connection with due to the connection between how you feel and how you should express it.

In a questionnaire that Dewaele and Pavlenko did they asked a group of multilingual participants to answer a couple of questions regarding their linguistic preferences for emotional terms, which included those that considered Japanese as one of their known languages. One Japanese participant said that Japanese requires too much formal expressions and expresses that she needs to be “more discreet and polite” when she’s speaking in Japanese. Another Japanese participant mentioned that “silence is beautiful in Japanese society” therefore she avoids expressing emotion, in this case she seldom says “I love you” in both Japanese and English.

Whether it’s due to the sociolinguistic or overall Japanese culture, coming from my own perspective I feel as if expressing any type of emotion in Japanese won’t ever come across as “authentic” as it would in English. Unlike Korean where expressing emotions or even exaggerating it is normal, in Japanese society you are expected to keep your emotions to yourself and can never be direct about it. Due to this cultural ideology I was never prepared to deal with any type of confrontation that may involve some type of emotion. Now that I’m older and work in a field where I have to deal with Japanese guests, any type of confrontation that may involve an upset response is hard to reply back to with a sincere answer. All that is expected, especially when they are upset, is to apologize but honestly that isn’t going to solve the issue at hand. This is when the two cultures clash. In an American society expressing your emotion isn’t expected to be held back yet in Japanese society it’s something you need to hold in. Therefore its almost as if I have a pass to cross that line because I was raised in the American culture but at the same time I can’t go too overboard without being labeled as a rude person. Being a language learner myself it makes me wonder if this sort of topic is necessary for teachers to explain to their students, so

they can be better prepared when they are exposed to dealing with native speakers of any language.

The thought of teaching ST-words have always seemed to be off limits. It's only something we hear from late night TV shows or used in conversations we have with our friends in an informal setting. This brings up the question as to whether it's appropriate or not to teach students the context behind ST-words and emotional words. Sociolinguistic can be defined as having the ability to speak in the right context or ability to perform various speech acts. (Ramney. 1992.) Therefore teaching students the social context of how a language works is beneficial instead of just focusing on the grammar rules, a language learner needs to understand the meaning behind it in order to grasp the concept behind emotional words. Eventually all language learners are going to come across a time when everyday talk such as impoliteness or disrespect will be dealt with and they need to understand how to react in these situations. (Mugford. 2007) At this point it seems appropriate to teach students the correct behavior and how to react to it but there is always going to be a fine line that teachers needs to consider when it comes to their own ethics and how others may react.

As a teacher you are almost expected to know or at least have a good judgment on how to answer and tackle questions that your students may bring up, especially when it comes to language learning. Although teaching ST-words isn't automatically going to be on the curriculum, understanding how to explain it in the correct context will go a long way. If students were to ask about the sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic of a word then the teachers can develop a couple of methods in order to answer their students. One would be to develop "culture-specific

norms of appropriate behavior in the TL if no comparable norm exists in their L1.” (Dewaele, 2008) This will give students a chance to at least compare it to something that they may already know which creates a better connection between the two. Another method that in my opinion is still questionable would be the use of media and films. Exposing students to films that they may already have seen, breaking down the use of emotional words and how they are used in that specific context can be a better explanation than the students finding out what it means the hard way.

A prime example of how swear words can be explained and the complexity behind it is to use the topic as a discussion in class. Robin Mercury mentions in her article about this one situation she came across when she used to teach ESL/EFL students. The students would write in their weekly diary, asking a variety of questions, one student in particular asked how “bad words” are used and why American actors choose to use them in movies. Instead of avoiding the situation, Mercury used it as a class discussion explaining what they were and why even monolingual speakers need to be careful with their choice of words. Approaching the discussion in that manner not only lets students know that even monolingual speakers may not quite understand how ST-words are used but also ESL/EFL students shouldn’t be afraid of asking about these types of topics. A lot of students will try to learn on their own but learning it in a classroom setting will at least give them the resources to understand when, why, and how ST-words and emotions are used in a foreign language setting.

Swearing in society now has limited itself to four letter words and has been looked down upon if spoken in public. Children are forbidden to use it because they don’t understand the meaning behind it and women have been not to use it because it doesn’t seem very “lady-like”.

For native speakers, swearing has always been a topic of what words can we really label as swear words and if there is ever a proper time to use it. With these issues that monolingual speakers already have to face in regards of swearing brings up the question of how are non-native speakers supposed to learn the ins and outs of swearing. Using slang or swear words isn't necessarily a topic that teachers want to deal it but if its taught correctly with the right intentions being that their students can handle the sociolinguistic and sociopragmatics of that particular language, then it's something that needs to be in the future plans of teachers and researchers.

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