

Introduction to ViewPoints: On the dynamics of an academic life

Marije Michel¹ and Marjolijn Verspoor^{1,2}

¹University of Groningen | ²University of Pannonia

Abstract As a tribute to Wander Lowie's impact on Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) and L2 theory and conceptualization in the Netherlands we have asked a diverse group of local scholars to write a reaction to Lowie (2026).

Keywords introduction, complex dynamic systems, L2 development, applied linguistics

Article history

Received: February 15, 2026

Accepted: June 1, 2026

Online: October 14, 2026

Corresponding author

Marije Michel, m.c.michel@rug.nl

Response article

This article is part of a festschrift in honor of Wander Lowie. It is a response to Lowie, W.M. (2026). A complex dynamic systems approach to L2 development as a metatheory of language learning and teaching. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics* 15: DOI 10.51751/dujal26925, reprinted with permission from Atkinson et al. (2025b).

Author contributions

Funding information

Statement of interest

Statement of technology use

Supporting information

See p. 3

Wander Lowie is retiring and, in this *ViewPoint*, we would like to celebrate his contribution to our field. Lucky for us, he recently wrote a perspective summarizing his views on second language development (SLD) within a guest-edited collection in the *Modern Language Journal* known as the *Synergies project* (Atkinson et al., eds., 2025a). With special thanks to the publisher, journal and editors in chief, we have been able to reprint this perspective as Lowie (2026, this issue; originally published within Atkinson et al., 2025b) in the *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics* (DuJAL).

In his short piece, Wander elaborates on his take on second language (L2) development, unsurprisingly, as a complex dynamic system. These views fit well within the framework he has been a driving force in for the past years, namely, Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST). Together with the founders of the Applied Linguistics group at Groningen University, Kees de Bot and Marjolijn Verspoor, Wander has shaped the CDST perspective on SLD for the past decades (De Bot et al., 2007).

As a tribute to Wander's impact on CDST and L2 theory and conceptualization – including L2 development, learning, teaching, and assessment – we have asked a diverse group of local scholars to write a reaction to Lowie (2026). Their task was simple:

Write an open peer commentary to show how Wander's ideas and work have shaped your field of expertise and how you think it will continue to be relevant in the future. Focus on one or two aspects of Wander's original perspective piece (you might want to quote a specific statement) and apply your own expertise. Given that Wander loves data, you may use an example or case study that exemplifies how the tenets of Wander's ideas can, will, and/or should be applied to your specific field in the Netherlands. Specifically, we invite you to formulate in your contribution an extension of Wander's perspective, and how it opens an agenda for the future.

This resulted in a collection of contributions, each presenting a different viewpoint from a group of scholars that owe much to Wander being their colleague, mentor and friend. With their co-authored articles, they highlight how the dynamics of Wander's academic life has shaped a field from many different viewpoints: from theory to methodology, from conceptualization to applied and psycholinguistic research, from curriculum design and assessment to L2 pedagogy and practice. Below we give a brief outline of the contributions in the order that they appear.

1. CDST colleagues from the outset – Nienke Smit, Paul van Geert, Kees de Bot, Marijn van Dijk – reflect on the synergy that took place in a Groningen-based group of scholars and elaborate on Wander's views by focusing on the concepts of generalization, non-ergodicity, causality and explanation.
2. Dynamics, causality and development is also the focus of the contribution by Vanessa De Wilde, Lani Freeborn, May Wu, and Alex Housen. They illustrate how temporal network modelling can be leveraged to explore hypothesized interactions between linguistic subsystems.
3. Interactions and change over time is related to perturbations in a system. Vass Verkhodanova, Sybrine Bultena, Anna Pot, Marita Everhardt, and Merel Keijzer focus on the nature of such perturbations and explore a possible typology in terms of origins, timescales, or consequences for system reorganization.
4. System reorganization is also discussed by Ellie Harding and Matt Coler, who give a dynamical systems account of how L2 learning could take place at the neural level from the perspective of Neural Resonance Theory.
5. Going from the more theoretical and methodological contributions to research and pedagogical applications, Rasmus Steinkrauss, Hanneke Loerts, Greg Poarch, and Sake Jager examine the implications of a complex dynamic systems perspective for (research into) the individual learner, the multilingual classroom, and technologies in SLD and teaching.
6. Teaching a second language at the curricular level is discussed by Daniela Fasoglio, Rick de Graaff, Loes Groen, Hilde Hacquebord, and Bregtje Seton, who propose a dynamic programmatic language portfolio as a tool to enable constructive align-

ment between learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessment of the new examination programmes.

7. Programmes are implemented by teachers. Sible Andringa, Janine Berns, Nivja de Jong, Bert Le Bruyn, Maaïke Koffeman, and Marjon Tammenga-Helmantel, as representatives of the *Meesterschapsteam Moderne Vreemde Talen* [Modern Foreign Languages, MFL] offer thoughts on why it might be advantageous for teachers to consider language development from a dynamic perspective. They argue that teachers are professional perturbers who actively shape the general conditions for language learning in individual learners.
8. General L2 classroom conditions must be complemented with a specific theory of language development and translated into actual pedagogy. Audrey Rousse-Malpat, Marije Michel and Marjolijn Verspoor argue that usage-based views on language learning are complementary to CDST perspectives. They discuss how dynamic usage-based (DUB) views should be implemented, and how they may relate to individual learning trajectories.
9. While marveling at the complexity of L2 development, in the final contribution Jan Hulstijn argues to keep theory testing at the heart of (SLA) research.

With many thanks to all the contributors, the editors of DUJAL, and most importantly, Wander Lowie, for an academic life dedicated to CDST, L2 data and MFL education, but not least to his colleagues, mentees, students, and friends.

We wish the readers lots of joy and Wander, to you, a healthy and long life filled with the attractor states circling around skating, cycling, music, good food, and yes, (hopefully) the odd contribution to science and education.

Marije Michel & Marjolijn Verspoor (guest editors ViewPoints 2026, DuJAL)

Author contributions

Marije Michel: conceptualization and writing; Marjolijn Verspoor: conceptualization and writing.

Funding information

No funding was received for this study.

Statement of interest

The author(s) have declared that there were no conflicting interests.

Statement of technology use

No AI-based generative technology was used in the preparation of this manuscript and the execution of the research that the manuscript reports upon.

Supporting information

None.

References

- Atkinson, D., Mejía-Laguna, J., Ribeiro, A.C., Cappellini, M., Kayi-Aydar, H., & Lowie, W. (2025b). Relationality, interconnectedness, and identity: A process-focused approach to second language acquisition and teaching (SLA/T). *The Modern Language Journal*, 109(S1), 39-63. doi.org/10.1111/modl.12982
- Atkinson, D., Michel, M., & Ribeiro, A.C. (2025a). Introduction to the guest-edited issue: Synergies in second language acquisition and teaching (SLA/T). *The Modern Language Journal*, 109(S1), 3-14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12975>
- De Bot, K., Lowie, W., & Verspoor, M. (2007). A dynamic view as a complementary perspective. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 10(1), 51-55. doi:10.1017/S1366728906002732
- Lowie, W. (2026). A complex dynamic systems approach to L2 development as a metatheory of language learning and teaching. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics*. doi.org/10.51751/dujal26925