



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Second Language
Acquisition & Teaching

Graduate Interdisciplinary Program

SLAT COLLOQUIUM SERIES

April 12, 2024
4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Embodied Ecological Multilingual Language Learning and Teaching

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Dr. Dwight Atkinson
The University of Arizona

Location:
Modern Languages
Building, Room 310

Traditionally, language learning has been viewed as a cognitive activity--as occurring in the mind/brain. Since the beginning of "the social turn" in second language acquisition studies (Block, 2003), however, this view has come into question. In this talk, I present an "alternative" approach to multilingual language learning and teaching that views them primarily not as the extraction and internalization/ inculcation of linguistic knowledge, but as the progressive integration of organism and environment. The key idea is that we learn as we live, not in order primarily to *think*, but in order to productively *act* in our ecosocial environments, including classrooms.

Concepts underlying this general idea include: *alignment* (how humans, among other organisms, attune to their environments); *embodiment/multimodality* (how learning and teaching involve the whole body and all the senses, not just the brain); *we-processes* (that learners and teachers can act as a single ecological unit in the classroom) and *natural pedagogy* (how teaching based-learning is likely a biological endowment of the human species).

These fairly radical ideas will be concretely explored and illustrated using videos from a single ESL classroom in Australia. Like its topic, this presentation will be multimodal and multisensory--it will be the opposite of a formal "talking-head" type presentation.



Dr. Dwight Atkinson has taught and researched at 8 universities and a variety of other educational contexts in the U.S., Japan, India, and Hong Kong. He has been teaching in the SLAT program since 2015. Although officially retired as of 2022, he still serves on the SLAT Executive Council, advises SLAT students, and teaches occasional classes. His current academic interests include second language acquisition and teaching (SLA/T) theory and practice, multimodal interaction analysis of classroom language learning, qualitative research approaches, and ecological approaches to second language/multimodal writing. Along with some recent SLAT alumni and current SLAT students, he is a member of The Happy Cactus Research Group (see 2023 paper in *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*). He is currently working on a second edition of *Alternative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition* with Elena Taylor of Utah State University.