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Equity and Well-being as Goals and Frames for SLA Research

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Zoom Link:

<https://arizona.zoom.us/j/89787188443>

If you have any questions about the colloquium, please email GIDP-SLAT@arizona.edu

What societal, broad-impact goals can we choose to give meaning to second language acquisition (SLA) research? Despite the disaffection for ethics, power, and ideologies that has traditionally predominated the field (Ortega, 2005), I have argued for a social justice lens in SLA as a response to multilinguals' varied experiences across elite and marginalized contexts of learning (Ortega, 2019). Particular since the global pandemic crisis, I have turned to the potential of a decolonial lens to help sharpen social justice orientations from less neoliberal and more critical perspectives (Ortega, forthcoming; Zheng et al., 2025). Equity is the North Star that guides both approaches. However, public hostility against equity and diversity as human values is gravely threatening the work of educators and researchers of languages and multilinguals. Well-being is a concept that has been widely investigated (and measured quantitatively as well as qualitatively) in psychology (Disabato et al., 2025), and it has entered SLA with the burgeoning of positive psychology (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). In this talk, I examine the potential of well-being as a way to frame, or reframe, equity when investigating multilingual learning in our present times, noting affinities and dissonances with the social justice and decolonial frames. My purpose is to reflect on the barriers and possibilities that await SLA scholars who wish to embrace equity as a goal for their research and consider whether to choose and invest in social justice, decoloniality, or well-being as tools to increase the relevance of our research.



Lourdes Ortega (she/ella) is a Professor in the Department of Linguistics at Georgetown University. Her main area of research is in second language acquisition. She is best known for her award-winning meta-analysis of second language instruction in 2000, her best-seller textbook *Understanding Second Language Acquisition* (2009, translated into Mandarin in 2016), and for championing a bilingual turn in SLA. She co-edited, with Annick De Houwer, *The Cambridge Handbook of Bilingualism* (Cambridge University Press, 2019). Lourdes is the General Editor of *Language Learning*. She was President of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) in 2023-2024. She is the 2026 recipient of the AAAL Distinguished Scholarship and Service Award.

This colloquium is proudly co-sponsored by the University of Arizona's Second Language Acquisition and Teaching Program and the English Applied Linguistics Program.