

An Interview with APPLE Lecture Speaker Dr. Steven Thorne

Ashley Beccia, Jessica Coombs Brantigan, Abby Massaro

INTRODUCTION

On April 10th, 2026, the *Studies in Applied Linguistics & TESOL (SALT)* journal interviewed Dr. Steven Thorne, an invited speaker for the 2026 APPLE Lecture Series hosted by the Applied Linguistics and TESOL Program at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Dr. Thorne is a Professor of Second Language Acquisition in the Department of World Languages and Literatures at Portland State University, and holds a secondary appointment in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His research interests include cultural-historical and usage-based approaches to language development, technology-mediated language learning, and indigenous language maintenance and revitalization. He is co-author of *Sociocultural Theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development* (Oxford University Press, 2006) and has published extensively in leading journals, including the *Modern Language Journal*, *TESOL Quarterly*, and *Language Learning & Technology*. He received his M.A. in Hindi and Urdu and his Ph.D. in Language, Literacy, and Culture from the University of California, Berkeley.

THE INTERVIEW

The full interview is available [here](#).

Theoretical Pluralism in SLA

1. In your co-authored article “On the Need of Pluralism and Common Ground in SLA” (Pekarek Doehler et al., 2026), published earlier this year in *The Modern Language Journal*, you push back quite strongly against claims that SLA is in crisis. What do you see as the most compelling evidence that the field is actually flourishing? [[Q1 Video](#)]
2. One thing that stood out to me in the “On the Need for Pluralism” article is the emphasis on convergence without erasing difference. How do you foster genuine dialogue across perspectives while still maintaining different theoretical stances? [[Q2 Video](#)]
3. I’m wondering how theoretical pluralism informs your work on assemblage approaches and digital technologies, and, in particular, the work you’ll be discussing in your talk today. [[Q3 Video](#)]

Digitally Mediated Language Learning

4. In many of your works, you talk about the role of technology—including extended reality (XR) components—in “creating situated and affordance-rich conditions for action and

language learning” (Thorne et al., 2021, p. 120). Can you speak to the (potential and actual) affordances that you understand XR provide that *in particular* privileges its use over analog alternatives? [Q4 Video]

5. One of the benefits that you cite for the use of mobile AR is how it supports “hypercontextualization” and allows for “learning experiences rooted in particular places” (Thorne et al., 2021, p. 107). If the “phenotype” of learning relies on local non-human actants, how generalizable are materials to other contexts? Is this something you think about or are concerned with at all as you develop materials? [Q5 Video]
6. Your work has discussed how humans and technologies co-evolve and jointly shape interaction (e.g., Thorne, 2024). How does this relationship between humans and technology influence the ways learners participate and construct identities in digitally mediated environments compared to classroom contexts? [Q6 Video]
7. What advice would you give to language teachers trying to integrate tools like generative AI while still supporting meaningful language learning? [Q7 Video]

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