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Bio

Nikolay Slavkov is Full Professor and Director of the Canadian Centre for Research and Studies in Bilingualism and Language Planning (CCERBAL) at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) of the University of Ottawa. His research contributions include keynote addresses, edited volumes, journal articles, and book chapters on language pedagogy and innovation, child language development, family language policy, technology, bilingualism, multilingualism, and (Slavic) linguistics. His work has appeared in the *AILA Review*, *Canadian Modern Language Review*, *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *Foreign Language Annals*, *Second Language Research*, *Immersion Journal*, *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *TESL Canada*, *Lingua*, and *Journal of Slavic Linguistics*. He has taught in Canada, the United States, China, and Bulgaria.

LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LINGUISTIC RISK-TAKING

Authentic engagement is an important piece in the language teaching and learning puzzle. Learning a language needs to be translatable into real-life use and should confer holistic benefits to people in various social, professional, and personal contexts. Language learning should also be... *fun!* Against this backdrop, I will present the *Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative*, a new pedagogical approach developed on the campus of the University of Ottawa, the largest English-French bilingual university in the world. I will showcase a linguistic passport booklet and a digital app that were designed to increase learner engagement and push students out of their comfort zone into taking linguistic risks (in French or English). Linguistic risks are authentic communicative acts where students look for challenging professional, social, or personal situations. These are situations in which students would normally be hesitant to use the language that they are learning due to the “risk” of linguistic discomfort, anxiety, or lack of confidence. Yet, after actively seeking out and engaging in linguistic risk-taking, learners can experience the benefits of increased competence and confidence in the target language. Drawing on positive psychology, socialization, and gamification, I will also offer data from questionnaires, interviews, and app usage patterns validating the linguistic risk-taking approach and illustrating learner engagement. I will conclude by offering examples of how this approach can be adapted to other languages and contexts around the world.