

MPhil/MEd Research in Second Language Education

Key Features of the Course

The RSLE course encourages original and disruptive thinking and aims to foster an intellectual community that advances research and scholarship in applied linguistics and language education.

The course is unique in its design, providing students with diverse research and professional backgrounds with an opportunity to share expertise and cross-fertilise ideas (e.g. applied/educational linguistics, bilingual education, modern language, community/heritage language, Teaching English as a Second/Foreign/Additional Language, and Languages Other than English or LOTE).

The course has a strong emphasis on research training which culminates in the completion of a 15,000-word thesis submitted in early June (for MPhil) or by the end of August (for PGCE-MEd). The thesis entails original empirical research conducted in one, or where appropriate, more cultural contexts. Students are expected to draw on a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches to develop a rigorous framework for data analysis.

As a common thread running throughout the course, students will receive individual supervisions as well as group-based support in planning and analysing an empirical project of their choice which forms the centerpiece of their thesis.

Examples of recent thesis topics include:

- Social network analysis and second language development during study abroad
- Primary pupils' multilingual identity in foreign language learning
- Development of language teachers' Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge
- Motivational dynamics, positive psychology and third language acquisition
- Teacher and peer feedback in AI-assisted second language writing
- The relationship between foreign language learning and wellbeing
- Social media, self-directed learning and second language acquisition
- Automated assessment and feedback in L2 writing

The staff and students on the course are all members of the **Multilingualism and Languages Education Group (MuLtiE)** which hosts a wide range of teaching and research activities in the faculty:

- PhD/EdD in Second Language Education (SLE)
- MPhil/MEd in Research in Second Language Education (RSLE)
- PGCE in Modern Languages (ML)
- Cambridge Research in Community Language Education Network (CRiCLE)
- We Are Multilingual Initiative (WAM)
- Multilingualism and Languages Education Group Seminar Series (MuLtiE)

Module 1. Learning Context: Second Language Learning Theories across Disciplines

In this module, we examine two broad strands of theoretical approaches to language learning. In the cognitive and psycholinguistic strand, we look at language cognition, language

processing, and cross-linguistic influence in SLA in various educational contexts. In the sociocultural and sociolinguistic strand, we examine issues such as language mediation and scaffolding in relation to language development, as well as the theme of variation in relation to language use, attitude and identity. Other sub-themes examined in this module include motivation, learning strategy, corrective feedback, and instructed SLA.

Module 2. Pedagogical Context: Second Language Classroom Pedagogies across Cultures

In this module, we analyse the concept of L2 pedagogy and review key pedagogical approaches in the field, including Immersion, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English Medium Instruction (EMI), technology-enhanced language teaching. We problematise some of the assumptions of these pedagogies and critically debate what constitutes an 'appropriate pedagogy'. Other sub-themes in this module include language teacher cognition, learner engagement, academic literacy, and AI in language learning.

Module 3. Policy Context: International Perspectives on Language Education Policy and Multilingualism

In this module, we examine various issues in relation to bilingualism and multilingualism in the context of education policy-making and policy-delivery in different countries and regions. The course starts with a discussion of the theoretical and national policy frameworks for language planning. Subsequent sessions move from an analysis of the issues relating to medium of instruction in schools, to analysis of language diversity and multilingual practice in the classroom, and finally to examination of the relationship between language and identity at the individual level. Other sub-themes in this module include study abroad, intercultural communication, language assessment in diverse contexts, and practiced language policy.

Module 4. Methodological Context: Multiple Approaches to Researching Language, Learning and Education

In this module, we examine various approaches, methods and techniques that are often used in collection and analysis of language-related data. Complementing the generic Research Methods Strand (RMS), the module aims to consolidate students' knowledge of research and facilitate the translation of such knowledge into empirical work. Hands-on sessions on statistical analysis and qualitative analysis are provided for students to work with real data. Another aim of this module is to provide students with opportunities to develop their professional skills and scholarly identity, through participation in research seminars, workshops and presentations. This module features a practical session in collaboration with Cambridge University Press and Assessment or other professional organisations, involving RSLE alumni.