

Course descriptor

Language Education Research Methods

Credit rating

20 credits, SCQF 11

Course leader

Gillies Haughton

Short description of course

This course is suitable for pre- and post-experience language education professionals. The course aims to give participants the opportunity to develop a critical understanding of key concepts in language education research and to make informed choices in designing and implementing language education and language development research projects. The course will address the following main areas:

- A theoretical framework and paradigms for conceptualising what language education and professionals might choose to investigate, various approaches to such investigation, issues of validity and reliability regarding research questions and methods.
- Introduction to a range and variety of instruments available to language education researchers for collection, management and analysis of data, also interpretation and reporting of findings, and their critical evaluation.
- Awareness and critical understanding of current approaches to investigation and analysis of both oral and written language.

The course will consist of weekly lectures and linked small-group workshop / seminar sessions. Participants will be expected to participate in collaborative presentations during workshops followed by critical discussion, and constructive peer evaluation. Participants will be expected to undertake written work for both formative and summative assessment during and after the course.

Course learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course, participants will have demonstrated a/an

- Critical understanding of approaches to research design in language development and language education
- Critical understanding of methods and techniques available for implementing such research.
- Ability to evaluate critically researchers' choices of instrument

- Ability to evaluate critically evidence used in language and language education research in published accounts of research and personal professional practice.
- Ability to design independently a small-scale research investigation in an appropriate area of language research and be self critical in assessment of its strengths and limitations.
- Ability to account convincingly for their own choices of research instrument in specific contexts

Outline of content

- Introduction to language research: purposes, illustrative areas of focus, approaches taken by researchers (e.g. use of primary and secondary sources, a-priori thinking, received and experiential knowledge), ethics, plagiarism and acknowledgement, personal reflection.
- Paradigms for classifying language development and language education research: e.g. ethnographic, grounded theory, action research, curriculum evaluation and development, experimental, testing, quantitative - qualitative continuums.
- Framing research questions: issues of validity and reliability, triangulation, evaluating evidence in published research, understanding implications for personal professional practice,
- Instruments for data collection (1), design and administration of e.g. questionnaires, interviews.
- Instruments for data collection (2): e.g. observation, surveys, stimulated recall, logs and journals, non-verbal elicitation and response.
- Language analysis (1): written text
- Language analysis (2); oral text
- Testing and assessment for research purposes.
- Data analysis and presentation: e.g. significance, correlation, statistical tools, ethical factors in reporting, presentation of findings and evidence.
- Designing and implementing a mini research project and related choices: independence and collaboration, preparing a proposal, practicality issues.

Course assessment

Participants will be required to submit two pieces of work:

- an essay discussing how they might evaluate evidence to inform practice as a language professional. (1,000 words)
- design for a mini-research project, identifying, and justifying questions, methodology and intended modes of reporting, including initial piloting of the research design and a critical evaluation of it. (2,000 words)

Note. This shared core course represents a significant innovation through synthesis and development of existing planned and tried components. In order to maximise on potential synergies of sharing the core course on research methods at the levels of both staff and student participation, while at the same time avoiding gaps and compromises in areas of specific key interest to programmes and individuals, it is essential to ensure a considerable degree of flexibility in modes of delivery and details of course content. During the first few years of running this course jointly it will be desirable to ensure time for on-going collaborative planning of lectures and practical sessions, also to evaluate formatively strengths and weaknesses of heterogeneous workshop groups.

Indicative reading list.

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Clark-Carter, D. 2004. *Quantitative Psychological Research Textbook: A Student's Handbook*, (2nd revised edition). Psychology Press.

Cohen, L., C. Manion and K. Morrison. 2005. (6th edition) *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.

Cresswell, J.W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed method Approaches*. (2nd revised edition) London: Sage publications.

Edge, J. and K. Richards. 1993. *Teachers Develop Teachers Research*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Drever, E. 1995. *Using Semi-Structured Interviews in Small-Scale Research: A Teacher's Guide*. Edinburgh: Scottish Centre for Research in Education.

Gillham, B. 2000a. *Developing a Questionnaire*. London: Continuum.

Gillham, B. 2000b. *The Research Interview*. London: Continuum.

Hart, C. 1998. *Doing a Literature Review*, London: Sage Publications.

Hart, C. 2001. *Doing a Literature Search*, London: Sage Publications.

Have, P. T. 1998. *Doing Conversation analysis: A Practical Guide* (Introducing Qualitative Methods Series) London: Sage publications.

Holliday, A. 2002. *Doing and writing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Lampard, R. and C. Pole. 2001. *Practical Social Investigation: Qualitative and quantitative Methods in Social Research*. Prentice Hall,

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- Munn, P. and E. Drever. 1990. *Using questionnaires in small-scale research: A Teacher's Guide*. Edinburgh: Scottish Centre for Research in Education.
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- Silverman, D. 2006. *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. (3rd revised edition) London: Sage Publications.
- Simpson, M and J. Tuson. 1995. *Using Observations in Small-Scale Research: a beginner's guide*. Edinburgh: Scottish Centre for Research in Education.
- Slavin, R. E. 2002. "Evidence-based education policies: transforming educational practice and research". in *Educational Researcher*. Vol 31, No 7, pp15-21.
- Wallace, M. (1998) *Action Research for Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wallace, M. and A. Wray. 2006. *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates*. London: Sage Publications.