

**Instructor/supervisor:** Stephen Davies

**Seminar title:** Social issues in teaching and learning foreign languages

**Seminar description:**

The seminar will aim to get students thinking about the practical application of research methods in analysing the interplay of social processes at different levels of formal foreign language education. Schools are a central institution and a social system deeply embedded in contemporary society. An investigation into the workings of the education system can help in understanding how it is related to other institutions such as communities, families and other social groups. It is also important to analyse how the cognitive and social development of individuals and groups (micro-scale) is strongly influenced by the structures and networks in which they experience is embedded (macro-level). At the heart of the seminar is an attempt to investigate and understand the extent to which foreign language education reflects inequalities in society and often possibly contributes to them but also allows to alleviate and prevent them. Moreover, the results of this investigation should suggest solutions to the existing problems and give students greater reflexive insight into power relations as they play out in the educational field.

**Thematic scope of MA research areas:**

The seminar applies the power of qualitative analysis to a diverse set of important educational issues and the impact of the 'hidden curriculum'. MA topics may include all issues related to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Example research areas are: how learners fail or succeed in the education system; socio-cultural differences and inequalities; racial and ethnic inequalities in education; gender differences at school; the socialising role of education; the social impact of the internet and the 'digital divide'; the growth of alternative education and home-schooling. These topics may be approached using a range of methodological approaches and data collection techniques, such as questionnaires, interviews, observation, content analysis, etc. An emphasis will be placed on using multiple and mixed methods in order to triangulate data and produce more compelling findings.