

Department of Language and Communication Studies: Research Strategy for 2017–2020

1. Operating environment. At the Department of Language and Communication Studies we conduct research on language usage and language learning, interaction and media, as well as on their interfaces in a networked and diversifying world. Our core fields share the idea of language and communication as social activity in a changing world. Our world-class research has considerable societal impact and belongs in the University of Jyväskylä's core field of *languages, culture and communities in global change processes*. Our research is also linked to the University's core fields of *learning, teaching and the learning and growth environments that support development* and *information technology and the human in the knowledge society*. We are active in the profiling initiative funded by the Finnish Academy for applied language studies, the *Research Collegium for Language in Changing Society* (RECLAS), in cooperation with SOLKI, and contribute to the emerging core fields of *crises and societal change* and *multidisciplinary research on learning and teaching*.

2. Mission. We are an innovative, multifaceted and high-level research community that produces up-to-date knowledge on language and communication and proposes solutions that meet the needs of our changing society. Our applied language research is world class, and our communication and media research – with its focus on digital technology – is unique in Finland. The Department's research on multilingualism and multiculturalism is internationally recognised, and we have the only Sign Language Centre in the country. The Department is part of a national and international network, and an innovative and dynamic research and learning environment that attracts distinguished, talented researchers and students.

3. Values and strengths. The core values of our research are quality, ethical responsibility, and applicability. We value free, open and critical knowledge creation and work in close cooperation with different members of society. Among the strengths of our research are its international reach, its high quality, and its societal impact. Our way of working is dynamic and we work in co-operation with international partners as well as with national and local interest groups. We actively and successfully seek external funding and are a leading source of publications within our core fields. The Department produces new, societally relevant scientific knowledge in the fields of language and communication.

The core fields of our research are closely integrated in our work. Applied language studies, one of our profiled areas, includes our internationally recognised core fields of *discourse studies* and *language learning and teaching*. In cooperation with other actors and international partners, we make important new contributions to the discipline in our profiling project, *Language in Changing Society*. Our research into multilingualism, which is internationally renowned, challenges established ideas in the field and develops action models to answer the questions of our changing society. Research on digital media and interactive communication technology and its related professions is promoted in collaboration with key interest groups. Our strong links to the world of work increase the impact of our research.

Discourses, participation and mobility in a multilingual and multicultural world. Multidisciplinary, multimethodological discourse studies focus on the dynamic relationship between the use of linguistic and other semiotic resources and social activity: what is done with language, and how. In discourse studies, language is analysed critically as a creator and modifier of reality, particularly in the building of knowledge, identities, and ways of working. Central to these studies is the power of discourses to affect participation: research on the dynamics of belonging, inclusion and exclusion is especially important in a diversifying, multilingual world marked by the multidirectional mobility of

people, products and ideas. Discourse studies contribute to the societal debate on the significance of language usage, multilingualism, and language expertise in a changing world.

Language learning and teaching in changing learning environments. Our research on language learning and teaching explores language in changing learning environments and as a meaning-making activity that relies on a range of multilingual and multiform resources. Topics include the processes and practices of language learning and teaching as well as learners' experiences at different ages. These issues are studied using theories and methods appropriate for exploring linguistic, social, interactive and cognitive activities and actors. Our goals are to take a fresh look at established ideas about language and learning as well as to develop new pedagogical practices.

Interaction and media in a networked communication environment. Research on interaction and media examines communication in a networked environment, where the importance of digital communication is highlighted. Central phenomena include the changes and crises caused by technology and globalisation. These are studied particularly from the perspectives of working life interaction, communications professions, and media landscape change. Our research is of national importance, particularly within the domains of digital communication, the development of journalism, and technology-mediated interaction.

4. Emerging research areas. Our high-level research makes a major contribution to science and has a strong societal impact. We produce ethical, critical and applicable knowledge and propose solutions to emerging issues of language and communication. In our core fields and at their interfaces, we are at the international cutting edge of applied language studies.

In 2017–2020 we will develop a research environment that creates synergy for the realisation of multidisciplinary joint projects and enables world-class research within our core fields. We will actively explore the intersections of applied language studies, discourse studies, language learning, media and communication research, which will provide socially valuable knowledge. Our aim is to take a fresh approach to applied language studies and experiment with the tools and meaning of socially critical and participatory language research.

Between 2017 and 2020 we will set up innovative research themes and groups to enhance research collaboration in our Department, identifying these themes with the help of the following topics and keywords:

- 1. Language and communication expertise in changing working life**
- 2. Lifelong learning: learning, participation and the life course**
- 3. The responsibility of speech at times of societal crises**



5. Aims and action plan

1. *Research.* Our Department is a research community made up of a wide range of experts, where open, enquiring and critical discussion, collaboration, and knowledge production are promoted. Research in our core fields is at the global cutting edge. We produce new, internationally recognised and relevant knowledge in language and communication studies. In collaboration with other researchers and interested parties, we invigorate our core field of applied language studies. We contribute to language and communication research on societal change, particularly concerning language and communication expertise, changing working life, learning environments, and communication technology. In addition, we identify and support emerging research areas within the core fields of the University of Jyväskylä and of our Department. These areas are theoretically or methodologically new, or they take a stand on emerging social issues.

2. *Competing for external funding.* The Department actively applies for substantial external funding (e.g. the Centres of Excellence and strategic research funding from the Academy of Finland, Horizon 2020, Tekes, major foundations) with its key partners.

3. *Publishing.* The quantity and quality of the Department's publications are raised by reporting research results primarily in the most respected journals (mostly Publication Forum levels 2–3). The ever increasing opportunities for open access are also taken into consideration when publishing.

4. *Recruitment.* In compliance with its research strategy, the Department recruits distinguished, talented and innovative researchers and doctoral students, taking into account the four-level model for career paths at the University.

5. *Supporting our research.* The Department helps its research staff to focus on research through its work plans, teaching cooperation, strategic funding, and facilities. The Department is also involved in developing research infrastructures at the national level. We support the opportunities available to

members of our community to participate in and influence the development of research work. We also encourage international mobility.

Action plan for 2017–2020

Research	<p>Scientific research is promoted by developing international and national networks and cooperation in our core fields through, for example, strategic funding, support for mobility, and work plan arrangements.</p> <p>Cooperation with key players in the core fields of applied language studies and communication studies is strengthened and created through joint projects, seminars and workshops. Newly emerging fields are identified through strategy work, strategic funding and research evaluation. Open discussion and participation in the development of the research environment are promoted through joint events and communication.</p>
External funding	<p>The Department supports the preparation of projects and applications for external research funding through, for example, strategic funding, networking, training, peer support and mentoring. The Department provides guidance on how to make use of the training and preparation resources offered by the Faculty, the University of Jyväskylä and the Academy of Finland.</p> <p>The time spent on planning, applying for funding, managing, and other participation, particularly in large national and international projects, is taken into account in staff work plans.</p>
Publishing	<p>The Department works with its research staff to set clear individual goals for publishing. These goals are agreed upon in development discussions and followed up in work plans. The Department seeks to increase the number of its high-level scientific publications (Publication Forum level 2–3) through focused training sessions, language editing, peer support, and work plan arrangements.</p>
Recruitment	<p>Recruitment is based on the research strategy.</p>
Improving the possibilities to conduct research	<p>In the work plans of professors and other research staff, a clearly defined time is allotted for research this may be, for instance, sabbatical terms or periods, as well as period teaching, course rotation, and collaboration in teaching and other tasks. Staff members and doctoral students are supported in the development of a career as a researcher through development discussions, mentoring and peer support. The Department makes use of the University’s research infrastructure and encourages its staff to participate in the training and work counselling offered by the University. Representatives of the Department participate in the academic administration of the University and in the work of national organs.</p>
Networking and societal impact	<p>International mobility and research collaboration are promoted by utilising funding for networking, mobility and exchange, and through work arrangements. The Department reinforces R&D cooperation with companies, organisations and other interest groups by allocating strategic funding to new initiatives.</p>

6. Evaluation

The achievement of the aforementioned goals is evaluated annually in the Department's Operating and Financial Plan as well as in individual development discussions and performance evaluation discussions. Data collected on the University's results are considered in the evaluation. Strategy is developed by the Research Steering Group.