

Oral examination *Sprachbeherrschung*

The administration

- Registration for the state exam is very early – usually in January and July half a year before your scheduled start. For binding and up-to-date information please consult the *Prüfungsamt*.
- Please note that though the *Sprachbeherrschung* examination counts towards your final grade, it is not part of the state examination. This means that you can only repeat it (once) if you take it during your studies, as a *studienbegleitender Leistungsnachweis*.
- Please contact Ms. Leitenstorfer (Bismarckstr. 1, C5A0, 85-22435, gabriele.leitenstorfer@angl.phil.uni-erlangen.de) during the first three weeks of the semester to let her know who you would like to examine you. Though we always try to accommodate your wishes, there is no guarantee that everyone will get the examiner they chose.
- If you would like to know the date of your examination and the name of your examiner, please contact Ms. Leitenstorfer up to two months prior to the beginning of the *Prüfungszeitraum* - but note that the dates may still change then and are only truly fixed two weeks before the beginning of your *Prüfungszeitraum*.

The examination's setting

- Your first examiner will be a teacher from the university language centre (for example, the person you did the exam preparation course with).
- Your second examiner will be a school teacher. He/she will take the minutes and ask you one question.
- The duration of the examination will be 20 minutes. We will start with questions on vocabulary. At least a third (and at most half) of the time will be devoted to this part.
- At least 50% of the exam has to be in English. Therefore the grammar part, which is the more important one, will be in English, whereas you may do the vocabulary part in either English or German.

The testing procedure

- You will choose one of three texts which are upside-down.
- The examiner will then briefly tell you what your text is about and ask you to comment on the items that are marked by underlining.
- The grammar areas from the course programme are most likely to turn up in the examination. Note, though, that questions from outside these areas are possible as well, as the examination does not test what you learned in a particular course but your general skills and knowledge.
- Grammatical items of interest will be underlined with a solid line, while vocabulary items will be marked with a dotted line.
- As a rule, we will not discuss all the underlined items, but only part of them.

The questions

- The **grammar part**: you are expected to demonstrate that you can discuss form and function of grammatical phenomena in a well-structured manner and that you are able to explain grammatical rules and their exceptions using suitable terminology and providing examples. You may expect questions of the following type:
 - What is the underlined item?
⇒ e.g. “a defining relative clause”
 - What function does it have in this context?
⇒ e.g. “provide essential, defining information about ...”
 - Can you tell me more about this phenomenon?
⇒ reproduce your factual grammatical knowledge: e.g. types of X; construction of X; prerequisites for the application of a particular rule; signal words; exceptions; differences to related phenomena; ...
 - Can you give me other examples for this phenomenon?

- The **vocabulary part**: you are expected to show that you have a good knowledge of English lexis and that you are aware of the problems learners might experience with particular words. You may expect questions of the following type:
 - What is the part of speech of this word?
 - What does the word mean in this context?
⇒ definition; synonyms; translation equivalents
 - In which other contexts could you use this word? What does the word mean in these other contexts?
⇒ e.g. *to meet* does not only mean ‘treffen’ but also ‘kennenlernen’, e.g. in *Nice to meet you*.
 - Can you give me related words?
⇒ synonyms; antonyms; hyponyms; hyperonyms; word family; word field; collocates; idioms; proverbs; homonyms; homophones; homographs
 - Please comment on the item’s word-formation background.
⇒ irregularities; order of affixation; compound type; explain acronym; ...
 - Please comment on the word’s style.
⇒ technical language; degree of formality; regional variation; ...
 - What problems might your future pupils experience with this word?
⇒ spelling; pronunciation; false friends; irregular inflection; ...
 - In what constructions does this word usually occur?
⇒ *to*-infinitive; *-ing* form; prepositions that combine with it; ...

Exam (preparation) strategies

- Attending an exam preparation course is definitely a very good strategy, particularly because you will notice that certain areas of grammar are more likely to come up in the examination than others. It therefore makes sense to prepare these topics in more detail.
- Ideally, **you** should do most of the talking in the examination because this means that the examiner has less time to ask difficult questions. “Mini-presentations” enable you to show your well-structured knowledge of a particular area. Thus, on the basis of a particular grammatical phenomenon in a text, you could provide information on its name, form, function, rules, exceptions, related phenomena etc. – all with examples, of course. The most suitable topics for such mini-presentations are the following:
 - tense
 - aspect
 - future
 - reported speech
 - passive
 - conditional
 - relative clauses.

Recommended reading

Grammar

Foley, Mark and Diane Hall (2003): *Longman Advanced Learners' Grammar. A Self-Study Reference & Practice Book with Answers*. Edinburgh: Pearson.

[Provides you with explanation sections, exercises and answers.]

Herbst, Thomas, Rita Stoll and Rudolf Westermayr (1991): *Terminologie der Sprachbeschreibung: Ein Lernwörterbuch für das Anglistikstudium*. Ismaning: Hueber.

[Gives you a brief and readable overview of the central grammatical aspects.]

Hewings, Martin (2005): *Advanced Grammar in Use. A Self-Study Reference and Practice book for Advanced Students of English (With Answers)*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: CUP.

[Each double page consists of a one-page overview of a particular grammatical phenomenon + one page of corresponding exercises with solutions in the appendix.]

Quirk, Randolph et al. (1985): *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.

[Comprehensive indeed. This large volume provides a well-researched linguistic background to English grammar.]

Sammon, Geoff (2002): *Exploring English Grammar*. Berlin: Cornelsen.

[If you like Cornelsen's *Studium Kompakt* series, you may also like this book, which has the immense advantage of being written explicitly for German learners of English.]

SEALING 2: *Syntaxanalyse im Examen*. Script. University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

[This script, which you can buy in the *Anglistik* secretary's office C 5A5, will help you understand the structure of English sentences – a necessary prerequisite for our analyses in class.]

Swan, Michael (2005): *Practical English Usage*. 3rd ed. Oxford: OUP.

[Not the "typical" grammar book, it is similar to dictionaries in having entries for many individual phenomena. An indispensable reference in cases of doubt.]

Ungerer, Friedrich et al. (1984): *A Grammar of Present-Day English*. Stuttgart: Klett.

[The well-structured classic for German learners of English.]

Vocabulary

Bulmer, A.F. and W.R. Adamson (1996): *Which Words? A Fresh Approach to Vocabulary Building for Advanced Students*. Southampton: Englang.

[Not only useful but also fun to read.]

Hoffmann, Hans G. and Marion Hoffmann (2003): *Großer Lernwortschatz Englisch*. 2nd ed. Ismaning: Hueber.

[If you want to learn vocabulary with German translation equivalents, this is the book for you.]

Humphrey, Richard (2001): *Your Words, Your World*. Stuttgart: Klett.

McCarthy, Michael and Felicity O'Dell (2002): *English Vocabulary in Use. Advanced*. Cambridge: CUP.

Parkes, Geoff and Alan Cornell (1989): *German-English False Friends*. (3 Vols). Southampton: Englang.

[These books give you an idea of possible false friends – but handle with care and don't let them confuse you. The pictures are fun, though.]