

SPRACHPRAXIS @ SAARLAND UNIVERSITY

Welcome to Sprachpraxis! This handout will explain what the Department of English expects of you as a learner and how you can best go about improving your English.

Overview of language courses

Language Course I (LC I) is the first of four language courses offered in the department, all of which are designed to improve your English, and to help you prepare for the two [Modulklausuren](#), *Language and Use Intermediate* and *Language and Use Advanced*.¹ LCs I and II are taken by all students in the department; LCs III and IV by *Lehramtsstudierenden* only (LC III is also cross-listed as *Fachdidaktik*). As outlined below, the expectation is that students devote a considerable amount of independent study to improving their language skills whilst studying in the department.

Students often take L&U Intermediate directly after attending LCs I and II, and L&U Advanced after LC IV. This is, however, only a guideline and you are under no obligation to take the exam at any specific point in your studies. You may consider, for example, taking the language courses more than once and with different instructors as this will give you additional language practice. Similarly, for obvious reasons, many students find it easier to take the exam after their stay abroad. It is ultimately up to you to decide when you feel ready to tackle the *Modulklausuren*. If in doubt, speak to your instructor(s). Please see [here](#) for an FAQ page on the Language and Use exams.

Developing Your Independent Learning Skills

The primary goal of the language courses is to help you develop independent learning strategies, identify your weaknesses and correct them where necessary, and give you practice in the sort of tasks you might encounter in the *Modulklausuren*. They are **NOT** designed to bring each individual student's language skills to the required CEFR² level ([C1](#) for BA students; [C2](#) for *Lehramtsstudierende*). In other words, attending the language courses alone (even more than once) won't guarantee that you will pass the exam as language skills are highly individual and differ from student to student. Achieving a CEFR level [C1](#) or [C2](#) means that you have mastered the language to reach approximately the same standard as that of an educated native speaker. The mastery of a language is a tremendous accomplishment and not something that can be achieved by attending two or three 15-week language courses.

What this means is that a considerable effort on your part is needed to raise your language skills to the required level. You need to become an independent learner who makes the most out of the learning opportunities available both in the department and beyond. Within *Sprachpraxis* we offer a range of courses to advance your speaking, reading, listening and writing skills, as well as your knowledge of grammar. It is important to understand that these courses are all interconnected. In other words, they should be regarded as opportunities to learn transferable language skills. For example, once you have learnt in what order information is usually conveyed in written English, you need to pay attention to how this is realised in authentic texts. Similarly, when you learn a new grammatical structure, try to [notice](#) its use and to apply it in your own writing and speaking. Note as well that there are connections to be made between courses both in and outside of *Sprachpraxis*, for example the importance of the Introduction to Linguistics–Syntax course to the advanced language course, or the application of the knowledge and skills you learn in Phonetics (lecture and course) to the Oral Expression course. To summarise, a language is a system in which everything is connected, and you need to draw links between different courses wherever possible.

¹ For further information, please see: <https://www.uni-saarland.de/fachrichtung/anglistik/your-studies/exams-info/lu-intmd-and-adv-exam-specifications.html> and <https://www.uni-saarland.de/fachrichtung/anglistik/your-studies/exams-info/l-and-u-intmd.html> and <https://www.uni-saarland.de/fachrichtung/anglistik/your-studies/exams-info/l-and-u-adv.html>

² Please familiarise yourself with the following CEFR self-assessment grid: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045bb52>
See <http://www.englishprofile.org> for a comprehensive overview of grammar/vocabulary expected at different CEFR levels

Expanding Your Reading and Listening Habits

If you are not yet in the habit of reading for pleasure (in English, of course!), now is a good time to start. As part of your studies in British and North American literature you will have to read a number of literary texts, all of which are excellent examples of the myriad styles of written English. You may also want to start reading an English newspaper on a daily basis to immerse yourself in the cultures of the language you are studying and to learn new vocabulary. Check below for a comprehensive list of resources available to help you to improve your English. Also, feel free to approach any of your instructors if you are unsure where to start. They are there to help you!

While reading is still one of the best ways to learn a language, there are other things you can do to improve your English. For example, you can listen to English podcasts, audio books or radio stations, most of which are available over the Internet free of charge (suggestions below). You should also aim to watch English-language films and television series in the original language — with English subtitles if necessary — rather than the dubbed version. Do make sure, however, to access an eclectic mix of resources so that you become familiar with a variety of registers³. And finally, do try to spend as much time in English-speaking countries as possible. If you have the opportunity to go abroad in your semester breaks, do so! If you have the opportunity to extend your compulsory stay abroad, do so! The experience will be unforgettable, and your English will improve markedly.

In short, it is important that you become an **active language learner**. This means that you need to read and listen *actively* for new vocabulary and/or grammatical structures and you need to practise the newly-learned language in order to incorporate it into your active vocabulary. You will learn more about how to go about this in LC I, but **do** approach your instructors if you have any questions or if you are unsure what is expected of you. A good first step is to buy a vocabulary book to jot down new language. You should also begin to familiarise yourself with some of the resources listed below.

RESOURCES

Top book recommendations⁴

Grammar⁵

- Hall & Foley, *Longman Advanced Learners' Grammar* (2003) (used in many of our Sprachpraxis courses)
- Michael Swan, *Practical English Usage* (4th edition; 2016)
 - Also available online: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/grammar/practical-english-usage>
- Biber et al, *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (2002)
- Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, *The Grammar Book* (2010) (a must-have for prospective teachers)

Vocabulary

- *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English* (2009)
 - Also available online: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/collocations/>
- *Ozdic Collocations dictionary*: <https://ozdic.com>
- *Longman Language Activator: for Upper Intermediate - Advanced Learners* (2004)
- *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2014)

Writing

- Steven Pinker, *The Sense of Style* (2014) (highly recommended read)
- Nelson & Greenbaum, *An Introduction to English Grammar* (2015) (especially Chapters 6 (Style) and 8 (Punctuation))

³ Register = Use of language (words, expressions and grammatical constructions) to suit different contexts

⁴ The syntax terminology we often use is highly influenced by the terminology used in both *Greenbaum & Quirk* and *Biber et al.*

⁵ If you wish to use a reference grammar that is not listed here, please come and talk to us first.

- Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* (2004)

Online Dictionaries and other resources

- **Tandem** app (allows you to **practise your English with native speakers** from English-speaking countries)
- **YouGlish** - Use YouTube to **improve your English pronunciation**. With more than 40M tracks, YouGlish gives you fast, unbiased answers about how English is spoken by real people and in context.
- **Oxford English Dictionary** (The UdS is an institutional subscriber⁶)
- [Academic Word List practice exercises](#)
- Merriam-Webster Online
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary
- Cambridge Dictionaries Online
- Online Etymology Resource

The following translation sites are not all used or supported by the staff; they are listed here so that you can give them a try for comparison's sake. Bilingual dictionaries can be a useful tool to quickly check the meaning of an unknown word/expression but they don't tell you how to use the new language. You should therefore always consult bilingual dictionaries in combination with monolingual ones.

- dict.cc – Deutsch-Englisch-Wörterbuch (<http://www.dict.cc>)
- BEOLINGUS – Your Online Dictionary (<http://dict.tu-chemnitz.de>)
- LEO (<http://www.leo.org>)

Teaching Materials/Resources, Blogs

- onestopenglish.com (Macmillan Publishers Ltd)
- www.englishprofile.org (Vocabulary and Grammar at different levels of the CEFR)
- British Council / BBC: Teaching English
- **BBC Learning English**
- Macmillan Dictionary Blog
- Thornbury's *An A-Z of ELT*
- **TED talks**

Writing and Grammar

The English department has its own writing centre that provides students with valuable resources both online and in person. You will find helpful guides on the centre's webpage under "Writing Tips & Resources." The centre offers one-on-one appointments for students to seek assistance/guidance with their writing tasks. More information can be found under: <https://www.uni-saarland.de/fachrichtung/anglistik/writing-center.html>

- Cambridge English: [Write & Improve](#) – An interactive platform where you can write texts and receive instant feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and style.
- [The Internet Grammar of English](#)
- [Guide to Grammar and Writing](#)
- [The Punctuation Guide](#)
- [University of Bristol Grammar tutorial](#)
- [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#)
- [Victoria University of Wellington: Paragraph writing](#)
- [Paragraph writing](#)
- [Writing and punctuation](#)
- [Writing a CV and cover letter](#)

⁶ You will need to download and install the UdS VPN client. See: http://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Fachrichtungen/fr34_Geschichte/moehler/materialien/info/Einrichtung_VPN.pdf

- [Manchester Phrasebank](#)

Selected News Sources

- [BBC Culture](#)
- [BBC News](#)
- [The Economist](#)
- [The Guardian | Audio](#)
- [The Independent](#)
- [The Irish Times](#)
- [National Public Radio News](#)
- [The New York Times](#)
- [Orion Magazine](#)
- [The Progressive](#)
- [The Times](#)
- [ABC \(Australia\)](#)
- [CBC \(Canada\)](#)

Radio/Podcasts

- BBC Learning English – [The English We Speak](#): A podcast that explains idiomatic expressions and advanced vocabulary in context.
- [Luke's English Podcast](#) – A well-regarded podcast with episodes on various aspects of English at advanced levels.
- [Open Culture](#) – Offers free access to audiobooks, language lessons, and university lectures for advanced learners.
- Saarland University [RoPeCast](#)
- BBC Radio [Podcasts](#) (downloadable)
(The following XML links can be entered into your favourite podcast software)
- [ABC podcasts](#) | Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Radio National
- [BBC podcasts](#) | British Broadcasting Corporation
- [CBC podcasts](#) | Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
- [NPR podcasts](#) | National Public Radio (U.S.)
- [GeekSpeak \(http://geekspeak.org/episodes/rss.xml\)](http://geekspeak.org/episodes/rss.xml)
- [TED Radio Hour \(http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast.php?id=510298\)](http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast.php?id=510298)
- [Quirks and Quarks \(CBC\) \(http://www.cbc.ca/podcasting/includes/quirks.xml\)](http://www.cbc.ca/podcasting/includes/quirks.xml)
- [The World in Words \(http://feeds.feedburner.com/pri/world-words\)](http://feeds.feedburner.com/pri/world-words)
- [A Way with Words \(http://feeds.waywordradio.org/awwwpodcast\)](http://feeds.waywordradio.org/awwwpodcast)

COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Listening comprehension

- <http://www.learnenglishfeelgood.com/eslvideo/>
- <https://www.esl-lab.com/difficult/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/multimedia/btp/>
- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening/c1-listening>

Reading comprehension

- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading/c1-reading>
- <http://www.manythings.org/voa/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/multimedia/btp/>
- <https://linguapress.com/advanced.htm>

Grammar

- Biber et al., *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. (1999)
- Greenbaum & Quirk, *A Student's Grammar of the English Language* (1991)
- Quirk et al., *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985)
- Leech & Svartvik, *A Communicative Grammar of English* (2003/2015)
- Carter & McCarthy, *Cambridge Grammar of English* (2006) (particularly strong on the grammar of spoken English)
- Michael Swan, *The Good Grammar Book* (2001) (particularly good for tense and aspect)
- David Crystal, *Making Sense of Grammar* (2004)
- Martin Parrott, *Grammar for English Language Teachers* (2010)
- Ron Cowan, *The Teacher's Grammar of English* (2008)

Vocabulary

This is, of course, not a comprehensive list and you need to be proactive about developing your vocabulary.

- Hewings & Haines, *Grammar and Vocabulary for Advanced* (2015)
- Mark Skipper, *Advanced Grammar and Vocabulary* (2014)
- Turton & Heaton, *Longman Dictionary of Common Errors* (1996)
- Watcyn-Jones & Johnston, *Test your Vocabulary 3* (2002)
- Watcyn-Jones & Farrell, *Test your Vocabulary 4* (2002)
- Watcyn-Jones & Farrell, *Test your Vocabulary 5* (2002)
- Watcyn-Jones & Allsop, *Test your Prepositions* (2000)
- Jake Allsop, *Test your Phrasal Verbs* (2000)
- B J Thomas, *Advanced Vocabulary and Idiom* (1995)
- Marks & Woode, *Check Your Vocabulary for Natural English Collocations* (2007)
- Paul Nation, *4000 Essential English Words*, (Books 1 – 6) (2009)

Writing

- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing/c1-writing>
- Oliver Kamm, *Accidence Will Happen: The Non-Pedantic Guide to English* (2015)
- Ben Yagoda, *How to Not Write Bad: The Most Common Writing Problems and the Best Ways to Avoid Them* (2013)
- Ben Yagoda, *When You Catch an Adjective, Kill It: The Parts of Speech, for Better And/Or Worse* (2007)
- David Crystal, *Making a Point: The Pernickety Story of English Punctuation* (2015)
- Stephen Bailey, *Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students* (2014)

Speaking

- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/speaking>
- David Crystal, *The Gift of the Gab: How Eloquence Works* (2016)
- Ashton & Shepherd, *Work on our Accent: Clearer Pronunciation for better Communication* (2012)

Online

- CEFR level C1: <http://www.flo-joe.com/cae/students/index.htm>
- CEFR level C2: <http://www.flo-joe.com/cpe/students/index.htm>
- Oxford Word of the Day: <http://feeds.feedburner.com/OLD-WordOfTheDay>
- M-W Word of the Day: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/word-of-the-day>
- Academic Word List: <http://www.englishvocabularyexercises.com/AWL/#what>
 - Practice: <https://www.ieltsbuddy.com/academic-word-list.html#sublist1>
 - Practice: <http://www.englishvocabularyexercises.com/AWL/>
 - Practice: <https://www.konan-u.ac.jp/hp/mach/awl/index.html>