

# Oral Exam in English Linguistics

## Univ-Prof. Dr. Erik Schleef

This document describes the procedure involved in the registration and preparation for an oral exam in English Linguistics for the MA in Linguistics and the MA Lehramt English.

### 1. Topics and procedure

**For students in the MA Lehramt English** the exam is a combined examination of English Linguistics, the other subject and pedagogy (if students opt for an oral rather than a written exam in the latter). Students select one subdiscipline in their subjects, so literary and cultural studies as well as teaching methodology are *not* separate exam subjects if English Linguistics is selected. Typically, the exam will be of at least 60 minutes' duration, of which **20 minutes will be dedicated to English Linguistics**. The candidate selects one topic, which will be examined in these 20 minutes. If the MA-thesis was written in the area of English linguistics, these 20 minutes will be dedicated to its defense within the thematic context of the selected topic. There is no additional exam topic except for the one in which the MA-thesis is located.

**For students in the MA in Linguistics** the exam is dedicated exclusively to English Linguistics. The candidate selects two linguistics topics, each of which will be tested for approximately 30 minutes. The first of these topics arises out of the thematic context of the MA-thesis. Typically, **the exam will be of 60 minutes' duration**, of which 15 to 20 minutes are set aside for the presentation of the MA-thesis and some 10 minutes for discussion within the thematic context of the MA-thesis. This is followed by an examination of the second topic.

Candidates are required to demonstrate broad factual knowledge of the chosen area(s), alongside the ability to provide and discuss specific facts and arguments. For example, candidates should be able to display their capacity to use terminology correctly and appropriately, to describe ideas, models and factual connections, as well as to analyse and comment on short examples of language data. ***The English Linguistics exam is conducted entirely in English.*** Candidates are expected to provide answers using coherent, fluent and correct English.

Although candidates may focus on one or two topics, they are also required to possess fundamental knowledge and skills in English grammar, phonetics and phonology; approximately at the level of introductory English Linguistics. They should ensure they can identify parts of speech and sentence constituents, and have a good grasp of important phonetic and phonological terms; for example, vowel, consonant, syllable, phoneme, allophone, etc. To revise the former, you may wish to consult the Internet Grammar of English (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/>), and for the latter, refer to your lecture notes for your Introduction to English Linguistics.

### 2. Exam registration

It is the examinees responsibility to arrange an exam date by contacting the examiners. Each examination panel consists of at least two examiners and one exam chair. If the panel consists of three examiners, one of these can take on the role of exam chair. This is normally the thesis supervisor. Please note that ***Professor Schleef is not available for oral exams between 22. July and 11. September.*** Make sure to ***visit Professor Schleef during his office hours*** to discuss the exam topic(s) and ask any remaining questions. An appointment for this visit is not necessary. This conversation should proceed in English as it is excellent preparation for the exam. You should ***make contact two to three months ahead of your preferred date***, and sign up for an exam slot at least a month in advance. This will ensure careful preparation on your part and facilitate effective planning in our department and school. Moreover, ***you will also have to register at the school's exam office for the exam to be legally binding.***

Please **send your reading list to Professor Schleef at least two weeks before the exam**. He will then confirm it and, where necessary, suggest changes. The reading list should include at least **two more substantial books and three journal articles or book chapters per topic**. Electronic copies of the latter should be sent to Professor Schleef along with the reading list. The selection of texts, thus, allows the candidate to emphasise certain areas within a topic. The reading list must also include the name of the examinee and their degree programme.

Please also **submit a summary of your topic(s) and subtopics no later than two days before the exam**. Typically, this comprises some two to four single-spaced pages per topic and can be written in the form of bullet points. The summary should include the major points of your selected topic(s), which have been covered while revising for the exam. This includes relevant terms, major ideas and explanatory models in addition to examples, if applicable. The summary should be concise and focused, clear, well-structured and complete. It serves the primary purpose of providing the examiner with an overview of the internal logic applied to exploring the exam topic(s).

### **3. Selection of exam topics and exam preparation**

Depending on the programme, the candidate selects one or two exam topics following consultation with the examiner(s). This/these topic(s) should derive from larger modules of the curriculum and be based on the student's interests and courses taken. **Professor Schleef examines exclusively in the following areas:**

- 1) Core areas in English Linguistics: e.g. phonetics, phonology, syntax, etc. Note that if you select semantics, you must include logic as one of your subtopics. If you select morphology, you must include theoretical models of word formation as a subtopic.
- 2) Sociolinguistics of English: e.g. language variation and change, language and gender, language contact, multilingualism, language attitudes, style, and similar topics
- 3) Regional language variation: e.g. accents and dialects in Britain, the US, Australia, NZ, etc., World Englishes, and similar topics
- 4) History of the English language: e.g. Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, language contact in the history of English, standardisation of English, syntactic change in the history of English, phonological change, and similar topics
- 5) Discourse analysis (widely conceived): e.g. pragmatic markers, intercultural communication, conversation analysis, and related topics

Within each topic, you may **focus on four specific subtopics**. For example, if morphology was selected, candidates may choose to focus on: (a) a general introduction to morphology; (b) compounding; (c) derivation; and (d) theoretical models of word formation. For Middle English, one might select subtopics, such as: (a) an overview of the history of English; (b) standardisation of English; (c) language contact in Middle English; and (d) Middle English phonology. If your exam includes two topics, it is commonly recommended (but not obligatory) to choose one topic from the core areas of linguistics, see (1) above, and one from another area, see (2) to (5).

### **4. Exam process**

The exam chair will begin by welcoming and introducing all those present. The candidate can then choose with which subject or topic they want to begin. The exam chair will take notes during the exam, including for all the key questions. When the exam has come to an end, the candidate will be asked to leave the room for a few minutes. At this juncture, the examiners and chair will discuss the exam and determine the final mark(s) before signing the examination form. The candidate will be invited to return to the exam room, and the mark(s) will be announced. The candidate may then leave. The examination form will be sent to the exam office, and a transcript will be issued after a designated period.