



English in the Sprachlehrinstitut

This handout is for all new students of English at the University of Konstanz. It provides information on the English Section of the Sprachlehrinstitut (SLI), on the kinds of practical language courses offered there and it gives tips on how to decide which courses to take when.

Tips and Information for Newcomers

The Sprachlehrinstitut (SLI) is responsible for all the practical language teaching at the University, in English, French, Spanish, Italian etc. Whether you want to become a teacher later and do the 'Lehramt Englisch' course, or a B.A./M.A. British and American Studies/B.A.Sprachwissenschaft or an M.A. Wirtschaftspädagogik you will see that the Exam/Study Regulations for your particular course of studies require you to take a certain number of **practical language classes**. It is the English Section staff of the Sprachlehrinstitut who hold these courses, and many more besides.

Some basic orientation tips:

The Sprachlehrinstitut can be found on the seventh floor in Wings D and E

The offices of the English Section staff are in Wing D

The rooms used for teaching are E 701-719 and D 707

The office of the Secretary of the Sprachlehrinstitut is E 711

The notice boards on E7: here you will find the programme in print for each term. This has the same information as on the Internet but is probably easier to understand as you see the whole structure of the course programme.

The pin boards outside staff offices D 703-706: here you will find lots of useful information

The Selbstlernzentrum E 704: here you can do some independent learning, with textbooks, CDs, TV, computers

The Tandem Office E 715: here you can register to get a language learning partner and do some more independent learning

In the University library make sure you know where to find:

- The “Semesterapparate”. Here books are on reserve, which means they are always available, under the name of the person teaching the course
- The parts of the library where the /fse/eng/ame/spr/lit/ books are as these cover language, language learning and literature
- The Mediothek in the library has language learning aids e.g. textbooks, cassettes, videos

The English Section offers a wide range of practical English language classes at different levels. These include Oral Proficiency, Pronunciation, Grammar, Reading, Writing and Translating Skills, and Area and Cultural Studies.

In this way students have the opportunity to acquire a high level of English skills and a wide knowledge of various English cultures.

A few technical terms:

Course of Studies:	Studiengang
Main subject (Major):	Hauptfach
Subsidiary subject (Minor):	Nebenfach
Examination regulations:	Prüfungsordnung
Study regulations:	Studienordnung

The following are only relevant for those on the old State Exam course for future teachers, i.e. starting before Winter term 2010:

Basic Course of Studies (i.e. up to the Intermediate Exam):	Grundstudium
Intermediate Exam:	Zwischenprüfung
Main Course of Studies - (i.e. after the Intermediate Exam, up to the Final Exam):	Hauptstudium
State Exam:	Staatsexamen

So, how do you decide which courses to take and when?
This is the main question for all first semester students.

The answer depends firstly on what course of studies you are going to be on e.g. 'Lehramt', B.A. or M.A. courses. For each course of studies there is a separate set of regulations so make sure you consult these. These regulations provide information on all the courses you have to take, exams you may have to take etc. They are all available on the Internet. Some students like to read these carefully even though they are only beginning their studies as it gives them a clearer idea of what kind of knowledge and skills they are expected to acquire.

In some courses it is clearly stipulated when you take which language class; in others there is more freedom so your decision will also depend on your personal career aims and the state of your English.

You can use the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and comments to help you decide:

- (1) What classes do I HAVE TO do in English during my course of studies?*
- (2) Are the 4 or 5 - or whatever - practical English classes required by the regulations going to be enough?*
- (3) What order should I do the courses in?*
- (4) How do I get credits for a course?*
- (5) I've done 9 years of English at school. Why can't I do a Translation class in my first semester at university?*
- (6) Is there some kind of examination in English?*
- (7) Will my English improve at university?*
- (8) I've spent a year abroad, why should I bother going to classes here?*
- (9) How can the courses in the Sprachlehrinstitut prepare me for my future career?*
- (10) How do I know whether I need a pronunciation class, or more writing skills, or more grammar ...?*
- (11) I don't want to learn American English! I want to learn British English (or vice versa)*
- (12) I hate Grammar. I want to read books!*

(14) Who can I ask if I don't know what to do?

(15) What courses does the English Section recommend?

You can look at the answers to individual questions if you like but we would advise you to read them all!

(1) What classes do I HAVE TO DO in English during my course of studies?

There is no one single answer valid for everyone. It depends what course you are on.

There are separate Study/Exam regulations for each course of studies. They tell you **how many** practical English language classes you are required to do and **when**. It could be 9 classes within 6 terms (B.A. Sprachwissenschaft), or 3 classes in the first 4 terms followed by 2 classes in the next 2 terms (B.A. BAST Hauptfach), for example.

The regulations for the 'Lehramt' course also specify **which** courses you have to attend.

(The following is only relevant for those on the old 'Lehramt' State Exam course who began their studies before the WS 2010:

Students are required to do the following classes before the Intermediate Exam: Oral Proficiency, Basic Academic Writing, Translation German – English. In their Main course of studies they have to do three practical language courses in the Sprachlehrinstitut (free choice, but see staff recommendations). They also have to do two Area and Cultural Studies courses in the Sprachlehrinstitut.)

Please note that how many and which courses you are required to attend varies, depending on your course of studies. It also depends on whether you are doing English as a main subject or as a subsidiary. Make sure you consult the relevant regulations, available on the Internet.

For the start of the academic year I compiled a list of the requirements for each separate course of study. This list may still be available in the Sprachlehrinstitut.

(2) Are the 4 or 5 - or whatever - practical English classes required by the regulations going to be enough?

This is a question often asked. The answer is "Probably not", especially if you are only required to do 3 classes (B.A. BAST Nebenfach), or if you aim to be a

teacher. If you keep in mind what you (especially future teachers) should be able to do by the time you graduate, namely reach a near native-speaker level, it should be clear that it is hardly likely that you will reach this level of competence in oral and written skills by attending only the bare number of practical English classes required.

So build up your skills and competence step by step, taking at least one English course per semester. And make use of the good opportunities you have to spend a year abroad as a student or assistant teacher. Keep in mind that even if you have spent some time abroad already e.g. during a High School year, at the university you are at a different stage in life and will profit in a different way from going abroad (again).

See also: [FyF_ha_stayabroad.pdf](#)
[FyF_ha_assistantteacher.pdf](#)

(3) What order should I do the courses in?

In general it makes sense to see the courses offered like a building-bricks programme, so build the solid foundation first.

At the very beginning of your course of studies, if you feel unsure, you could do a Study Skills class before you move on to the specific skills below.

It makes sense to do Reading Skills, Vocabulary Skills and Grammar before you tackle Writing Skills; and spend some time abroad before you tackle Translating Skills.

Or work on your pronunciation in a Pronunciation class before attending an advanced level Oral Skills. Perhaps put off doing an Area Studies class until you feel able to speak freely and read large quantities without great difficulty.

To help you choose, every English course offered in the Sprachlehrinstitut is clearly labelled as to Target Group and Level. It will say whether the course is suitable for BAs in their 1st semester or future teachers in their final semester, for example.

(4) How do I get credits?

To complete a course of studies you need to earn a certain number of credits.

If you read through the English Section programme you will see that along with each individual course description (Aims and Methods, Time and Place etc.) there is an indication of the number of credits you can earn for the course, normally three. There is also information given on the course requirements for obtaining these credits. What you have to do is always stated clearly, e.g. write a paper (kurze Hausarbeit), run a session of the class, give a talk (Referat), do a written test, complete a certain number of essays, produce a portfolio. Obviously, you also have to participate regularly in class.

Information on the credits obtained is stored electronically.

(5) I've done 9 years of English at school. Why can't I do a Translation class in my first semester at university?

Translating is a skill for which you need certain knowledge and experience. Before you can learn how to translate well you should have a good knowledge of **both** languages, German and English (grammar, vocabulary, register etc.); a wide general knowledge is useful for the topics in the texts to be translated. For this reason it makes sense to attend a Grammar and a Reading/Vocabulary Skills class before doing a Translating Skills class. Learning how to tackle the task of translating is much more interesting and rewarding if you have built a solid foundation first.

(6) Is there some kind of English examination in the Sprachlehrinstitut?

For students who began their 'Lehramt' course before WS 2010 there is a language paper set by the English section of the Sprachlehrinstitut, where students are required to do a translation from German into English and write an essay.

For all other students there is no formal written examination in English at the end of your course of studies. The practical language component of all courses whether 'Lehramt', B.A. or M.A., is covered by classes taken and successfully completed in the Sprachlehrinstitut.

(7) Will my English improve at university?

If you don't work regularly and attentively, the answer is "Probably not". There is no magic pill which will instantly transform your school English into graduate-level English. Continuous work is required! At least one English class in the Sprachlehrinstitut per term.

A term or better a year abroad (with eyes and ears open) will help greatly, but won't do the whole job either. For this reason there are courses which are recommended for before your stay abroad and others for after.

As there are very good opportunities at this university for learning on your own initiative, make use of them. See the tips for learning more English outside of class:

FyF_ha_eng_outsideclass.pdf

(9) I've spent a year abroad, why should I bother going to classes here?

You might have learned to speak fluent English abroad – but there is the chance that it's not really correct. And even if your English is good enough to communicate with other people, it still might not be good enough to hold discussions or write papers on academic topics or go into school and teach it. Think of your academic term/year abroad as a store of English (language and culture) that you can develop and polish when you are back at Konstanz University.

A good example is a pre-university year abroad as an au pair. This can help you acquire a great deal of very valuable experience but it is unlikely that you will learn how to talk about literature, linguistics or current affairs in English, use reference books, write an essay, translate, or read complex texts.

(9) How can the courses in the SLI prepare me for my future career?

If you know that you are going to be a teacher, you should make good use of the courses offered to build up a really good all-round competence in English, from using correct grammar in speaking and writing - and knowing how to explain it! – to acquiring an in-depth knowledge of several English-speaking cultures. In other jobs the emphasis could be on good reading skills in English, or oral communication skills.

If you don't know yet what you want to do later, then just acquire as much English as you possibly can. All the practical language work will be very, very useful later. The more at home you feel in the language, the easier it will be for you to concentrate on learning other skills on the job.

If you are a believer in life-long learning, then try to take the opportunity to attend an English class in which you are encouraged to be independent learners.

(10) How do I know whether I need a pronunciation class, or more writing skills, or more grammar...?

Experience has shown that many students do not have a realistic idea of their English. Make sure you get feedback from your teachers on your weaknesses and your strengths, and ask for individual recommendations. You should then attend classes to compensate for particular weaknesses you have.

(11) I don't want to learn American English! I want to learn British English! (or vice versa)

The answer is: you don't have to! The English Section staff represent the life styles and cultures of various countries: Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales, the USA and Canada, so you can choose to go where you feel most interested and most comfortable. You won't be trained to speak with a particular regional accent, but you will hear these accents and automatically learn a bit about the cultures of the countries when you are in class. The more different English language cultures you are familiar with, the better.

(12) I hate Grammar. I want to read books!

There are no Exam/Study regulations that I know of where you are obliged to do a Grammar class. Apart from any "musts", you can choose classes according to your own particular interests, and you can choose according to your own learning style. However, avoiding Grammar classes doesn't make much sense, especially if you want to be a teacher later, as grammar is not an add-on item but an integral part of meaning**. One consolation is that Grammar classes at university can be very different from Grammar at school and once you have done the basics of Grammar and Reading/Vocabulary Skills then you can understand and enjoy a Reading/Viewing/Discussion class such as Fiction and Film or Shakespeare on Screen much more.

Remember to keep a balance in your language courses and keep your final aim in mind.

** A couple of quick grammar questions. What is the difference in meaning between the following:

He's looking for game
He's looking for a game

I would have done it if I had known
I would have been doing it if I had known

I have done it
I did it
:-)

(13) Who can I ask if I don't know what to do?

The staff of the English Section in the Sprachlehrinstitut are the people to contact for any advice you need on choosing particular English classes, preparing for a

stay abroad, learning English outside class, preparing for external exams in English, careers etc. Every member of the staff has regular office hours, every week.

However, please remember to read the relevant Study/Exam regulations carefully first.

(14) What courses does the English Section recommend?

In general, students should try to follow the building-bricks principle as in (3), so the kind of courses particularly suitable for building the foundation during the first years of any course of studies are:

- (Study Skills)
- Communication Skills: Oral Proficiency
- (Pronunciation)
- Grammar
- Reading/Vocabulary Skills
- Basic (Academic) Writing Skills

All students, but future teachers in particular, your first two years of study should be followed by a stay abroad. This can be at a university or as an assistant teacher (teaching your mother tongue, German, to learners of German in an English-speaking country), or other work placement. This year abroad is an invaluable opportunity to improve your language competence, and equally important – acquire cultural competence and develop as a person.

See also:

FyF_ha_stayabroad.pdf

The kind of courses more suited to higher semesters:

- Advanced level Oral Skills
- Advanced level Writing Skills
- Translating Skills
- Area and Cultural Studies
- All kinds of Reading/Viewing/Discussion classes

ENJOY IT :-)

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