

The Linguistic Profile of Present-Day English

Type of course: BA.AA.SW07 (*Aufbaumodul English Grammar*)
Time: Tue. 2-4 p.m. (14:15 - 15:45)
Venue: Carl-Zeiss-Straße 3, SR 222
Workload: 5 ECTS



Course description

As a linguist, language teacher, translator or any other person dealing with English on a professional basis, it is vital to have an idea of the central and peculiar characteristics of the English language, especially when compared against closely related languages like German or a wider cross-linguistic background. The seminar is devoted to precisely this issue, trying to develop a 'bird's-eye' linguistic profile of Present-Day English in all major dimensions. On the basis of a classic reading on the topic (cf. below), we will directly elaborate on the core areas from your introductory classes (phonology and spelling, morphology and the lexicon, grammatical categories, etc.), but shift the focus to asking *why* Present-Day English has come to be the way it is. Therefore, our exploration will constantly need to make reference to important historical developments having affected the sounds, the word stock and the grammar of English over the last centuries.

Requirements and grading system

Regular attendance and active class participation

Oral contribution (either a brief recap of the previous session or short presentation of a specific problem set)

Final exam (in-class essay)

In keeping with the *Modulkatalog*, the final grade for the course will be based on the final exam only. Participation and the oral contribution are still an obligatory requirement for being able to enrol for the exam (*Vorleistungen*).

Readings

The course will provide the opportunity for the in-depth study of a 'classic' book for German students of English linguistics: Leisi, Ernst and Christian Mair (2008). *Das heutige Englisch: Wesenszüge und Probleme*. 9th ed. Heidelberg: Winter. (You can either purchase the book (it is very reasonably priced) or take advantage of weekly instalments of the relevant chapters, to be found on our course management system (cf. below).) Your most important task during the semester is to work through each chapter carefully, excerpting it in English (and thus effectively doing a lot of translation work as a nice side effect), and come to class prepared for discussion. In light of this workload, the amount of time that you'll need to put into the weekly preparation is thus not to be underestimated!

The course management system

The course management system of our department, **WORDWISE**, will be the online platform of this class. It is there that you download the weekly readings, follow-up handouts and materials, etc. Important information on the organisation of the course (e.g. announcements etc.) will also be distributed via **WORDWISE** (to your email address). Therefore, please enrol into this course on **WORDWISE** (the password was announced in class) and stay updated.

Office hours

Please take advantage of the office hours taking place every Tuesday. This is not only the place to discuss your contribution in advance, but also to talk about your progress in the course and any difficulties you may experience.

Course programme (syllabus)

DATE	CONTENTS AND OBLIGATORY LITERATURE	THEORETICAL INSIGHTS
	Introduction to the course	
1 16.10.12	<i>Goals and scope of the course. Organisation.</i>	
2 23.10.12	<i>The linguistic study of English and the present approach to describing PDE</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §1 (pages 1-4 and 8-11)	Approaches to language, the merits of diachronic and comparative perspectives. Resources for studying English.
	The sound structure of English	
3 30.10.12	<i>Phonetic and phonological profile: Suprasegmentals, consonant and vowel peculiarities, phonological aspects.</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §§2-5 (pages 12-27)	Illustration: Comparative and typological approaches to PDE.
4 06.11.12	<i>Phonological properties in relation to grammar and spelling</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §§6-8 (pages 27-40)	Reanalysis; homophony and issues of linguistic motivation; understanding spelling debates.
5 13.11.12	<i>English spelling continued. Reflection, study questions.</i>	
	The English word stock	
6 20.11.12	<i>Composition.</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §§9-10 (pages 41-58)	Principles of lexical organisation (I): Borrowing, calquing.
7 27.11.12	<i>Layering and its consequences.</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §§11-13 (pages 59-77)	Principles of lexical organisation (II): Layering, dissociation, folk etymology.
8 04.12.12	<i>Word-formation processes. Conversion and grammatical homonymy.</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §§14-15 (pages 78-94)	The driving forces of economy and analogy.
9 11.12.12	<i>Lexicalised phrases</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §16 (pages 94-101)	Problems of synchronic syntactic analysis.
	Grammatical structure	
10 18.12.12	<i>Strengthened categories (I): Aspect, tense, modality.</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §18 (pages 112-131)	Grammaticalization: Understanding the origins of grammar.
11 08.01.13	<i>The grammaticalization of the English TA-system.</i>	
12 15.01.13	<i>Strengthened categories (II): Constituent order and syntactic functions in the clause.</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §18 (138-140) and 19 (selected passages)	Understanding correlations of structural properties and co-adaptive changes.
13 22.01.13	<i>Weakened categories: Gender, case, number, subjunctive, voice, clause boundaries.</i> Leisi and Mair 2008: §19 (pages 140-152)	Economy and transparency in language
14 29.01.13	<i>Weakened categories continued: An overarching perspective and a hypothetical essay question.</i>	
15 05.02.13	<i>Summary, wrap-up and evaluation of the course.</i> optional: Leisi and Mair 2008: §24 (pages 184-205)	Optional: American English.
15.02.13	Final exam <i>Carl-Zeiss-Straße 3, HS 1, 10-12 Uhr</i>	