

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR THESES

This document provides an overview of possible topics for final theses (BA, MA, Staatsexamen) supervised by members of the linguistics department. The topic suggestions listed below are not exhaustive and, for the most part, merely point to areas of research; other project proposals are welcome.

If you are interested, contact the instructor(s) by e-mail or, preferably, attend one of their office hours.

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Phraseology

- The use and function of pragmatic idioms (e.g. *(Having) said that; Nice try; Fair enough*)
- Phraseology in particular text types (e.g. blogs, online forums, Wikipedia discussions, on-line reviews)
- (Lehramt): Teachers' formulaic performance
- Collocations in academic writing
- The impact of English on German phraseology (studies of particular genres, tv formats etc.)
- Phraseology in English as a lingua franca
- Phraseology as a translation problem

Humour research

- Techniques of verbal humour in political satire
- Translating verbal humour (studies of particular genres)
- Humour in semiotically complex genres (advertisements, cartoons, memes etc.)
- Humour in the workplace
- "Corona humour" (several approaches possible, e.g. humour and taboo, globalization of humour)
- Humour: a universal phenomenon that is culturally tinted?

English as a lingua franca

- English as a corporate language in international work settings (case studies)
- Humour in non-native speaker communication

The impact of English on other languages

- Studies of Anglicisms in particular genres and domains
- Anglicisms and semantic change ("*Ein Top-Angebot für Sie und Ihre Kids*" vs. "*Es ist nicht leicht, Karriere und Kind miteinander zu vereinbaren*")
- *At the end of the day - al final del día, die gläserne Decke - le plafond de verre*: comparative studies on Anglicisms
- *Communitymasken, Containment Scouts und Exitstrategie* – Anglicisms in the time of corona

Your thesis should be based on empirical work, which means that you are expected to collect your own data or use existing sources that are electronically available. Other ideas are welcome. See also 'Supervision' on my homepage.

Additional proposal (March 2021):

Related to a research project that aims at the development of an online e-learning platform enabling easy and fast creation of quizzes, tests and exercises for language learning I welcome candidates (especially teacher students) who would like to work on this topic. The thesis could focus on learners' and teachers' opinions and experiences in this area.

PROF. DR. ARNE LOHMANN

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My interest in linguistics is broad and diverse, which means that I am ready to supervise term papers and theses on a wide variety of topics. The following bullet points represent a selection of topics I have worked on myself. These research foci are not to be understood as an exhaustive list of possible topics for students' theses, so please feel free to suggest other topics of your own interest. For BA and MA theses I usually expect an empirical research project and I am ready to supervise theses based on corpus-linguistic analyses as well as offer advice on setting up an experiment.

- **Quantitative linguistics** (statistical methods in the study of language, corpus-linguistic approaches)
- **Acoustic phonetics** (both corpus-linguistic and in the lab)
- **Grammatical and other variation phenomena**
- **Questions of language processing** (from a psycholinguistic or a cognitive-linguistic perspective)
- **Word-formation**
- **Discourse markers**

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Thesis projects may have either an empirical orientation (i.e. data-based analysis of a particular linguistic phenomenon) or a theoretical focus (i.e. critical discussion of current issues and approaches based on a thorough literature review), although some empirical component is highly recommended, especially in theses for the MA and Staatsexamen degrees. Specific topics will be narrowed down and agreed on in consultations.

Language variation and change

- the history of English (all periods, but esp. Early Modern English)
- attitudes towards linguistic variation and change (prescriptivism, standard language ideology, usage guides, dialects, sociolects, public debates, ...)
- specific (socio)linguistic developments/trends/constructions in English varieties (incl. pidgins and creoles)
- grammaticalisation, lexicalisation, pragmaticalisation
- change across the lifespan of the individual speaker
- historical sociolinguistics (e.g. the role of gender and social class)
- general theories, mechanisms and motivations of language change (incl. cognitive, pragmatic, social factors)
- ...

Modelling linguistic knowledge and use

- cognitive-functional linguistics (vs. generative/formal linguistics)
- (usage-based) construction grammar
- corpus-linguistic approaches
- the idiom principle, collocations (incl. foreign language learning)
- cognitive linguistics (Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, metaphor, metonymy, critical discourse analysis, ...)
- the grammar of conversation
- ...

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- Cognitive linguistics
- Bilingualism: individual and societal
- Language acquisition: monolingual and bilingual, especially morpho-syntactic interface
- Contact linguistics and resulting phenomena, e.g. code-mixing, transfer phenomena, influence of L1 on L2 and vice versa
- Cognitive effects of bilingualism, e.g. executive control, working memory development
- Corpus linguistics
- Developmental disorders and language acquisition, e.g. dyslexia, ASD
- L2 acquisition

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The following lists should only provide some basic ideas, which need to be refined for your concrete thesis projects. Other suggestions related to the given linguistic sub-disciplines are always welcome. Most of the topics require empirical work with authentic corpus data.

Morphology/Word formation

e.g.

- selected patterns of English word formation (including comparative aspects with German or their historical development or their occurrence in different text types)
- stress assignment in complex words
- teaching word formation at school
- inflection of nouns, pronouns, verbs (incl. their historical development)
- morpheme types and problems of their classification

English syntax

e.g.

- selected aspects of complex sentences (e.g. form, function, role of subordinate clauses; comparison of different text types)
- conjunctions as cohesive devices
- tense, aspect, voice
- subcategories of verbs

Contrastive linguistics (English–German)

Comparison of various linguistic phenomena in English and German, incl. historical reasons for similarities and differences

e.g.

- constituent order in sentences
- semantic roles of subjects or objects
- tense and aspect
- non-finite clauses
- word formation types

Lexicography

e.g.

- comparing dictionaries of one type or comparing selected aspects in different types
- techniques of defining words in monolingual dictionaries
- syntax, morphology, phonetics and phonology in dictionaries
- teaching dictionary skills
- problems and chances of collaborative lexicography