UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

FACULTY OF
MEDIEVAL AND MODERN LANGUAGES

GERMAN
Language Guide

For the
PRELIMINARY COURSE
The Language Course

The first year of the German course is designed to consolidate and improve your language skills while exploring issues related to twentieth-century German society and culture and developing an appreciation of German language and literature. The syllabus is set out in the Handbook for the Preliminary Course in German, the course will prepare you for the Preliminary Examination, taken at the end of your first year. It consists of two parts that carry equal weight: Language (Paper I and Paper II) and Literature (Paper III and Paper IV). In order to pass Prelims, you need to pass both parts. Within each part, papers can compensate each other, e.g. if you pass Paper I and fail Paper II, it is still possible to pass the Language part if the marks overall are above the pass mark of 40 (see the "Descriptors for Prelims" in your Handbook, which set out the scale of marks and the criteria used for assessment).

Language teaching is provided partly by your college and partly by the Sub-faculty of German. Much of the teaching takes place in small classes, and you will have close personal contact with your tutors – this is luxury provision, and you should make good use of it! It will only benefit your language competence if you put in the necessary work independently outside classes - only you can do the learning.

The Examination Papers in German Language:

Paper I: Deutsche Gesellschaft und Kultur seit 1890 (see sample paper at the end of this booklet)
The paper is based on four topics: Generationen und Geschlechter; (Aus-)Bildung - wozu?; Arbeit zwischen Selbstverwirklichung und Entfremdung; Nation und Nationalismus. The two exercises are of equal weight.

1) Reading Comprehension: You will be given a text of around 400-450 words. This is on a subject that relates to the four topics studied. Roughly equal credit will be given for evidence of detailed comprehension, and for linguistic accuracy and variety. Answers in English will be discounted. You will be expected to answer three questions, aiming for the following length: 1(a) approximately 150 words, 1(b) approximately 100-150 words, 1(c) approximately 250 words.

2) Essay: You will be given approximately six questions that relate to the four topics studied, from which you choose one. You should aim for a length of 500-600 words. Roughly equal credit will be given for linguistic accuracy and variety, and for initiative, ability to take up and express complex ideas, and the shape of the argument. The exercise is not conceived as a test of detailed or specific knowledge.

Paper II: Translation into German (IIA, 1½ hrs) and Translation from German (IIB, 1½ hrs)
In both exercises, credit will be given for fluency and a sense of style, always bearing in mind the need for accuracy and appropriateness. The two exercises are of equal weight.
Language Teaching

You will follow an integrated programme of language teaching in which each part contributes to the whole. The first-year course is designed to focus on areas that will lay a secure foundation for the rest of your course and enable you to develop skills systematically beyond A-level competence. Emphasis will be placed on the development and precise use of vocabulary and grammar. Teaching is provided by a number of people:

- **College Tutor**: Your college tutor will oversee your programme of language teaching throughout your course and will act as your 'personal coach' to ensure you have the necessary support to make good progress. Classes for translation from and into German (Paper II) will be organised by your college tutor, who will also liaise closely with your Lektor about preparation for Paper I. If you have problems with your language learning, or need general advice, you should turn to your college tutor in the first instance.

- **Lektor**: Your college is part of a consortium of colleges that employs a Lektor, who is a native speaker of German. Across the colleges, there are five Lektors. They will participate in a centralised course providing lectures and seminars for Deutsche Gesellschaft und Kultur in Michaelmas Term and you will also have college-organised classes with your Lektor to prepare you for the Paper I Reading Comprehension and Essay. Over the three years of your course at Oxford, your Lektor will fulfil an important role in helping you develop your language skills.

- **Language Instructor**: The Language Instructor is employed by the Sub-faculty of German. The Language Instructor provides weekly grammar classes and lectures, coordinates German language teaching across the collegiate university and is responsible for the German beginners' programme.

- **Graduate Language Instructors**: These are employed by the Sub-faculty and they will give classes to provide additional grammar practice to support the structured programme provided by the Language Instructor.

Most of your language work will take place in classes: translation classes, grammar classes, classes designed to develop your essay-writing skills and discussion skills. You will be given assignments for these, and it is important that you do these thoroughly and hand them in good time to enable your tutor to provide feedback.

*Deutsche Gesellschaft und Kultur seit 1890*

In Michaelmas Term, there will be a centralised course on the four topics for this course. You will have a lecture and a class on each topic:

- Generationen und Geschlechter (weeks 1 and 2)
- (Aus-)Bildung - wozu? (weeks 3 and 4)
- Arbeit zwischen Selbstverwirklichung und Entfremdung (weeks 5 and 6)
- Nation und Nationalismus (weeks 7 and 8)

The lectures will give you exposure to German academic language in a lecture format, and introduce the four topics, providing information while stimulating ideas. The classes enable you to practise your oral skills and engage in discussion on the topics. The period covered in this course with the starting date of 1890 is designed to link up with the literary texts you are studying, and the topics are designed to relate to your texts. You should not therefore think of the topics in purely contemporary terms, but also develop a historical perspective and explore as many links as you can with the literary texts. You will not be required to show detailed knowledge of historical developments, but your literary texts can highlight key issues that are relevant to these, and provide useful example material.
In Hilary Term and Trinity Term, college classes will provide preparation for the Reading Comprehension exercise and Essay through written work.

Use the resources of the Language Centre, Faculty Library, German Society...
Study Skills: balancing language learning and tutorial work

Language learning and tutorial work each constitute half of your German course, and language papers carry the same weight as the tutorially taught papers both in the Preliminary Examination and in Finals. This should be reflected in the way you plan your work. It doesn’t mean that you’ll need to work for both aspects of the course in the same way; indeed you may need to develop quite different techniques and working patterns.

Plan ahead
Language work should carry the same weight as your work for tutorials, so you should make sure that you factor systematic language learning into your weekly time-table. As with tutorials, the contact hours in language classes are only the tip of the iceberg; they should provide the focus for independent work and an opportunity for feedback that will only be useful if you provide the necessary basis. So you will need to

- allow sufficient time to complete the pieces of language work set (3 hours per piece is a realistic estimate)
- set aside regular periods for systematic vocabulary learning and revision (15 minutes every day is better than 2 hours once a week)
- allow time to go over the work covered in the language classes and consolidate grammar

Work efficiently
You will make most progress if you find efficient ways of practising and developing your language skills. This may mean experimenting with different patterns of work. It may therefore be helpful to

- work out the time of the day when you are best able to remember vocabulary
- remember that language and literature work are interconnected: you can’t understand linguistics nuance unless you know about a culture, and you can’t find out about a culture unless you are able to appreciate linguistic nuance.
- establish connections between the different parts of your course. You could, for example, note down unusual phrases, verbal constructions and items of vocabulary while reading a set text, and transfer them onto your own database or record cards, or look for examples of grammatical constructions you have just revised in the literary texts you are reading for your tutorial work
- make a note of useful phrases for essay writing when reading German criticism
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar area</th>
<th>Hammer section/table</th>
<th>Essential German Grammar section/table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender of common nouns (note the gender markers, e.g. -ung, -schaft, -ment)</td>
<td>1.1.5-8</td>
<td>2.2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender agreement, esp. noun and 3rd person pronoun referring to it (e.g. Der Stuhl...... Er...)</td>
<td>1.1.13.a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plurals (especially the characteristic -(e)n in the dativ plural, e.g. den Füßen)</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak nouns</td>
<td>1.3.2-3;</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouns and adjectives of nationality and country (der/die Deutsche (adj. noun). Adjectives never capitalised. The rest are nouns in ~er /-erin or weak nouns.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectival endings (esp. after possessive adjectives (mein, dein), other determiners (dieser, solcher) and words that look like determiners but aren't (notably viele, einige, mehrere)</td>
<td>6.2.2-3, 5.2.2</td>
<td>4.1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common adjectival nouns and their endings (e.g. der/die Jugendliche, der/die Fremde, der/die Verwandte)</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions that go with specific adjectives and verbs</td>
<td>6.6; 18.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject/verb agreement (singular verbs used with plural subjects and vice versa)</td>
<td>12.1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong verb forms (including 3rd person sing. of present tense)</td>
<td>Table 12.12</td>
<td>6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'es gibt' (note how it is used as an equivalent to 'there is/are')</td>
<td>13.2.5;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive (normally, the werden-passive is the equivalent for the English passive)</td>
<td>15.2.2-3</td>
<td>6.8, 7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported speech (avoid tendency to over-use subjunctive)</td>
<td>16.6.1-4</td>
<td>7.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitive and intransitive verbs (using a transitive verb intransitively and vice versa)</td>
<td>18.3.4-5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common verbs taking the dative (e.g. geben, helfen, glauben, erlauben)</td>
<td>18.4.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The noun complement of sein is in the nominative</td>
<td>18.8; 4.8</td>
<td>8.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Page(s)</td>
<td>Reference(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position of adjectival complements in sentences/clauses involving sein</td>
<td>18.8 and Table 21.1</td>
<td>Table, p. 147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(near/at the end of the sentence/clause in 'complement' position)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Confusion of das and dass</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(das: article, demonstrative pronoun, or relative pronoun introducing a relative clause, e.g. Das Buch, das ich gelesen habe, ist gut. dass introduces a subordinate 'that'-clause, e.g. 'Ich glaube, dass...')</td>
<td>Tables 4.1, 5.1 and 5.8</td>
<td>3.1, 3.4, 10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinating conjunctions</td>
<td>19.2.1.d; 21.9.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(avoid juxtaposed conjunctions, e.g. dass, wenn... - confusing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case of the noun after prepositions where there is a choice between accusative and dative</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word order (esp. position of main verb &amp; infinitives in main/subordinate clauses)</td>
<td>21.1 and Table 21.1</td>
<td>Chapter 9, esp. 9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic uses of the comma</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary: Sharpen up your Learning Strategies

The quickest way to expand your vocabulary is to learn words systematically - just reading or listening is unlikely to be sufficient, and even a year abroad won't work wonders unless you support your exposure to the language with systematic learning. Finalists still regularly find that what lets them down in their translations and prose is their lack of vocabulary. Learning vocabulary takes time and effort, and you should experiment to find the methods that work best for you. Below you will find some suggestions. The following books are helpful: Paul Stocker, *Wort für Wort*, 3rd ed. (Hodder & Stoughton, 0340771631); Gabriele Forst, Veronika Schnorr et al., *Mastering German Vocabulary: A Thematic Approach* (Barron's, ISBN 0812091086).

- Use a vocabulary book in class, writing clearly. Put the title of the text and/or the subject area above the words you list, so you remember the context. Test yourself on the words and write difficult ones on separate cards.

- The best way to learn words is using cards (or pieces of paper, around 4cm by 8cm):
  - Write the German on the front and the English on the reverse.
  - Write clearly with a thin pen and use colour coding, e.g. Nouns: masculine - blue, feminine - red, neuter - green
  - Verbs: regular verbs - black, strong verbs - pink, irregular verbs - purple.
  - Always write the article before a noun
  - Test yourself on the word both ways.
  - Put the card aside once you know the word. Check the cards regularly.

- As you work your way through Hammer's Grammar, write out example words and any irregular words on cards. Add a note giving grammatical information on the reverse (e.g. "weak masc.").

- You should pay particular attention to verbs and verb valency. Learn the sentence patterns that go with verbs in phrases so you can remember use of cases and prepositions more easily. An excellent guide on differentiating verbal constructions is Martin Durrell, *Using German Synonyms* (CUP).

- Your strongest card in German is the morphological structure of the language – it allows you to recognise many more words than you need to learn from scratch:
  - Work with the chapter on Word Formation in Hammer and study it with a view to using the rules for expanding your vocabulary and noticing relationships between words.
  - Draw spider diagrams for each strong verb (they're worth learning, as they are among the most common verbs and are highly productive in forming other words!). Create as many verbs as possible with inseparable and separable prefixes, using your dictionary and noting the main meanings.
  - Take the past participles of strong verbs, and see what nouns you can find that are related to them (e.g. *gegangen* - *der Gang*; *gestanden* - *der Stand*).
  - Build word families: verb - noun - adj. (e.g. *biegen* - *der Bogen* - *biegsam*).
  - Find opposites.

- Make the words stick in as many ways as possible:
  - Write them down, once or several times.
  - Read them out loud.
  - Stick them on your wall.
  - Make up short sentences with them. It helps to learn them in context, especially verbs.
- Ask a friend to test you.
- Have vocab competitions.

- Set aside regular slots and stick to them - if you find you have lapsed, don’t get frustrated, just pick up again where you left off. It helps to have a routine. That way you’ll see progress.

Read the books for your tutorial work in German! Every minute you spend reading them in English is wasted as far as the development of your German competence is concerned. Conversely, reading is an excellent way of expanding your vocabulary, learning how it is used in context, and improving your feel for the language.

Revised by the Senior Language Instructor TT2019