



Vocabulary for Specialized Oral Communication, SoSe 2021

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS COURSE WILL ONLY BE OFFERED IF IT IS DEEMED USEFUL TO THE STUDENTS FROM OUR ITALIAN PARTNER UNIVERSITIES — OTHERWISE IT WILL BE CANCELLED.

This course is designed primarily for ERASMUS and other exchange students who are studying Applied Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting, and similar subjects. It is worth 3 ECTS points. The CEFR Level of the course is C1. It runs for one semester and is offered every summer semester. It represents both the companion course to and the continuation of “ERASMUS — Expanding your English Vocabulary Skills”, which is offered every winter semester. It also contains material adapted from my M.A. course “Mündliche Fachkommunikation (B I)”. Participants are expected to have or be approaching a C1-level command of English (and preferably also German), as well as a C2- or D-level command of at least one of the languages French, Italian, and Spanish. Due to the expected heterogeneity of the group, most of the interpreting practice done in this course will be out of ES, IT, FR or DE, and into EN. Native speakers of other languages than the five mentioned should contact the course leader by email before registering on LSF.

The aim of this course is to increase students' command of English vocabulary in specialized oral settings that involve mediation.

Whereas the winter-semester course on vocabulary skills takes a more (systemic-functional) grammatical approach to the study of vocabulary and to the oral/written dichotomy, the approach adopted in summer semester is a more (functional-notional) lexicological one; it is based on the principle that language is best learned as “grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar” (Michael Lewis).

We thus begin in summer semester with a brief theoretical introduction to the key concepts of lexicology; but because the course is aimed particularly at expanding oral skills, the concepts are elaborated inductively, beginning with spontaneous oral descriptions of unknown objects as a way of foregrounding the centrality of the concepts “hyponymy” and “meronymy”. Spontaneous descriptions and explanations of previously unseen maps and graphs are subsequently also used to activate and extend the students' command of the English resources for describing space, time, change, correlation, and causality. This is followed by one or two weeks of theoretical and practical work on derivational morphology, semantic relations between vocabulary items (such as synonymy and antonymy), polywords, fixed expressions, and collocation. We also look briefly at certain historical developments in the field of lexicography, examining not only the groundbreaking work represented by Johann Amos Comenius' *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* of 1658 but also the work of Peter Mark Roget with his *Thesaurus* (commenced in 1805, published in 1852) and the “great leap forward” of John McH. Sinclair' s *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary* of 1988. Students are also encouraged to acquire some degree of familiarity with the concepts of Field, Tenor and Mode as used in neo-Firthian linguistics, as reference will be made to them frequently. Altogether, the theoretical introduction will take about three or four weeks.

Because we cannot possibly cover all language-pairs or all topics that are likely to be relevant to students taking the course, the emphasis throughout will be on “learning how to learn”: developing techniques and strategies for “diving in” to a topic in two or more languages and becoming familiar with the directions in which its discourses flow and the patterns in the way its terminology is constructed. We will also practise some simple memory techniques, as note-taking during simulated interpreting sessions will be strictly limited to proper names and numbers!



The bulk of the course, from the fourth or fifth week onwards, will be devoted to preparing for, and conducting, mediation exercises between the languages FR, ES, IT, or DE on the one hand and EN on the other. The mediation exercises will be based on pre-recorded conversations in which the course leader asks his interview partner questions in English and the interview partner replies in their native language. Preparation, which will for the most part be done as homework, will include background reading on the topic(s) of the interview, gap-fills and other exercises to help activate vocabulary, searching for parallel texts (e.g. Wikipedia articles on the same topic but in different languages), and specific online searches for possible translation equivalents of key specialist terms.

Topic areas covered will include some but not all of the following (plus other topics that arise in the course of the semester): the culture of tea-drinking in Britain, kitchen design, food and its preparation, nomenclature of domestic animals, the Industrial Revolution, the life and work of Charles Darwin, the movement for Scottish independence, organ donation, fighting climate change, sustainable tourism, doping in sport, the future of artificial intelligence, veganism, the politics of gender, training to manage a hotel, marriage equality, life as an amputee, quality control in the automobile industry, the process of becoming a German citizen, raising children bilingually, truffles, search engine optimization, the working life of a conference interpreter, Saarbrücken nightlife in normal times, living with Asperger's, life as an army reserve officer, self-defence training, ...

Assessment will be by portfolio; the portfolio will contain weekly worksheets completed by the student in addition to a mini-assignment on either “nominal vs verbal style” or “lexical density”.

All materials will be made available here on the course website.

Students who prefer to “have everything in one place on Moodle” can start here:

<https://lms.sulb.uni-saarland.de/moodle/course/view.php?id=2150>