English Linguistics *Mémoire* Proposal Guidelines

Word count for proposal:	2,000-3,000 words

NB: The above word limit is for the proposal online; the *mémoire* itself should be approximately 100,000 characters (excluding references, notes and appendices), per faculty guidelines (http://www.unil.ch/files/live//sites/lettres/files/shared/fichier_pdf/Reglements/reglement_etudes_faculte_lettres_20-09-2011.pdf).

The purpose of your *mémoire* proposal is to demonstrate that:

- you have a thesis topic that is worth pursuing;
- you have a strong understanding of the relevant theory/framework/data/etc.;
- your topic should be scoped in a way that makes it manageable within the prescribed time frame while still making an original contribution, big or small, to the field.

As such, this proposal should have:

- a clearly defined and interesting research question;
- an explanation of why this question is worth researching;
- a plan for how to proceed with the study.

BEFORE YOU START

Before you start writing your proposal, you should discuss your ideas with the staff member(s) you would like to have as your supervisor(s). This is important not only to ensure that someone knows that you want to write a linguistics *mémoire* but also to help you refine and scope your plan. The list below will give you an idea of the research foci of the linguists in the English department.

If you are interested in writing your *mémoire* on any other topic, you are welcome to discuss these with us. We have provided some further suggestions for research across most subfields of linguistics as an appendix to the *English Linguistics Manual*.

Anita Auer	History of English, Philology (Old English, Middle English and Modern English), language variation and change (past and present, regional and social), corpus linguistics, stylistics (language of literature), dialectology, (socio)historical linguistics, language standardisation, language and gender, language and identity, language acquisition and language attrition, bi- and multilingualism, language and politics, discourse, language learning and teaching; British Englishes, North American Englishes
Patricia Ronan	Language variation and change, languages and cultures in the British Isles and Ireland, Forensic Linguistics and Authorship Attribution, English as a Second Language, English in Switzerland, Language Attitudes, Syntax and Morphology, Pragmatics
Jurg Schwyter	Stroke and all aspects of aphasia; language recovery and/or multilingualism after a stroke
Jennifer Thorburn	Language variation and change, sociolinguistics, minority language communities, second language/dialect acquisition, language commodification, dialect/language use in film/TV/ music/media, language attitudes, language and gender, language and sexuality, bi- and multilingualism, endangered

	languages, language maintenance and revitalisation, perceptual dialectology
Marije Van Hattum	Attitudes to language, Corpus Linguistics, Historical sociolinguistics, Historical syntax, Irish English, Language and Identity, Language and Migration, Language and Power, World Englishes

NB: We make every effort to ensure that students will work with their preferred supervisor(s) but we also want to be sure that you will receive enough support from your supervisor. If the staff member you approach should happen not to have any more capacities because they already supervise to many students to guarantee the best possible quality supervision, we may advise you to contact a different supervisor.

FORMAT
A good rule of thumb is to format your proposal as you would a research paper, with numbered headings in a logical order. A typical structure looks something like this:

1. Aim and scope of study
2. Contextualisation in terms of existing research (previous literature, theoretical framework)
3. Methodology (including method, data, procedures)
4. Planned structure of the mémoire
5. Schedule of work
6. Annotated bibliography

You are welcome to modify the suggested structure, as long as your proposal contains all of the necessary information. Feel free to use other headings if they are more suitable, for example, so long as the proposal has coherent flow and argumentation.

Consult the *English Linguistics Manual* to ensure that your references, examples, quotations, etc. are properly formatted. The most recent version can be found on the department page under 'Resources', as well as the ELiLa website (http://www.elila.ch).

Title
Your title should be concise and descriptive.

1. Aim and scope of study
This introductory section of your proposal should define your topic and provide the general scope of your research. Give an overview that answers the following questions:

- What is your topic and why do you want to study it?
- Why is this topic important?
- What data will you study?
- From which perspective will you approach your topic (e.g. historical linguistics, corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics, language variation and change, second language acquisition, etc.)?
- What is/are your research question(s)/statement(s)? (This can be done with bullets or a numbered list.)
- What are your hypotheses (with a brief explanation)?

It is important that you have very clear research aims, both for yourself and your supervisor, since this will help you to ensure that your project is manageable and that you have a good understanding of the work you are undertaking.

By the end of this section, your reader should be convinced of the need and merit of the proposed study.

2. Contextualisation in terms of existing research (previous literature, theoretical framework)

By the end of this section, your reader should be convinced that you have a good understanding of the phenomenon you are investigating and the key works related to the subject. This section should:

- outline your theoretical framework;
- synthesize the relevant research, using appropriate references;
- demonstrate your ability to think critically about the literature you are referencing. If you are looking at competing models, for example, outline the strengths and weaknesses of each.

This section should <u>not</u> be a lengthy literature review; instead, you should provide a concise overview of the literature and facts needed to contextualize your research. You can also provide operational definitions for terms/concepts that are crucial to the study if not explained in the introduction.

NB: Depending on the format and topic of your proposed mémoire*, you might find it easier to include your research questions and hypotheses after this section.*

3. Methodology
This section outlines your research design and is key when undertaking empirical work. Consider the following questions when preparing your study design:

- What data will you use: existing corpora or primary data to be collected?
- If you are using existing material, how will you access these resources? (You may need permission.)
- If you will be collecting your own data, who will speak with? When and where will data collection take place? Do you need to seek permission to work with your participants (e.g. if you are planning to work with a school)? Do you need to develop research instruments (e.g. questionnaires, experiments, tasks, etc.)?
- Do you need to prepare project information sheets, consent forms, etc.?
- What sampling technique will you employ? (= Who will be included in your sample?)
- Which analytical tools/methods will you use?

If you are planning a more theoretical thesis, you will need to think about the following questions instead:

Describe your sample. You should also address questions of the reliability of the research instruments you will employ, as well as any ethical considerations and potential pitfalls.

4. Planned structure of the mémoire
This section is an outline of your intended *mémoire*. You should include all the main headings and subheadings that you will include, to give both yourself and your supervisor an idea of the ground that your *mémoire* will cover.

5. Schedule of work
This section is a detailed timeline of work, from the proposal submission through to the official submission of your *mémoire*. It will help you to plan out when and what you need to do for a timely submission of your finished *mémoire*. You should schedule when you will be reading, writing, analysing, and editing for each of the sections (as applicable). At minimum, you should identify what task(s) you will be working on using two-week intervals.

Making this schedule will help you determine if your project is feasible as a *mémoire* so you should be as realistic as possible. For example, you should give yourself a break at Christmas. You should also build some flexibility into your schedule in case you run into unexpected problems, or if life happens.

6. Annotated bibliography
You may not have a fully developed understanding of all of the relevant literature before writing your proposal but you should have done enough background reading to ensure that your study is grounded properly in the field and to demonstrate that you have a good understanding of the phenomenon that you

are investigating. Provide a brief annotated bibliography (50-100 words per item) of a minimum of 10 relevant secondary materials you have consulted. (Annotations need only be one short paragraph.) Remember to think critically while preparing your annotations since this will help you down the road!

References must be formatted following the conventions outlined in the *English Linguistics Manual*.

SUBMITTING YOUR PROPOSAL
Proposals can be submitted electronically to your desired supervisor, unless you have made alternate arrangements with him/her.

FURTHER RESOURCES
The references listed below may help you develop your project ideas:

Buckingham, L. 2016. *Doing a Research Project in English Linguistics: A Guide for Students*. London and New York: Routledge.

Sealey, A. 2010. *Researching English Language: A Resource Book for Students*. London and New York: Routledge.

Wray, A. and A. Bloomer. 2012. *Projects in Linguistics and Language Studies.* 3rd ed. London and New York: Routledge.

The references listed below may help you develop your proposal writing skills:

Locke, L.F., W.W. Spirduso and S.J. Silverman. 2013. *Proposals That Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

- http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/125024/postgraduate/2006/guidelines_for_writing_research_proposals/2
- http://web.pdx.edu/~dbls/proposals.html
- http://www.bu.edu/applied-linguistics/for-current-students/forms/generic-proposal-template/
- http://lct-master.org/getfile.php?id=26&n=1&dt=AE&ft=pdf&type=TH
- http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk