

Report of Examiners

July 9, 2015

MPhil and MSt in General Linguistics and Comparative Philology, 2015

1. Examination Arrangements

There were 8 MSt and 14 MPhil candidates (1 resit). 12 MPhil 1st year candidates also sat for Paper A. From this year we have introduced a new system of examining and marking the Theoretical Paper (Paper A) at the end of the 1st year for the MPhil students.

The final Examiners' meeting was held on 3 July 2013. All candidates sat their examinations in Schools, one with special permission granted for extra time.

Examiners

Prof Aditi Lahiri (Somerville College) (Chair)

Dr Ash Asudeh (Jesus College)

Dr Wolfgang de Melo (Wolfson College)

Prof. Peter Austin (SOAS, External)

Assessors

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| Dr Ash Asudeh (Jesus) | Dr Mary MacRobert (LMH) |
| Dr Peter Barber (Wolfson) | Prof Martin Maiden (Trinity) |
| Dr Chiara Cappellaro (St Johns) | Dr Wolfgang de Melo (Wolfson) |
| Prof John Coleman (Wolfson) | Dr Louise Mycock |
| Dr Younghae Chi (Regents) | Prof Leslie Milroy |
| Prof Mary Dalrymple (Linacre) | Dr Lynda Mugglestone (Pembroke) |
| Prof Bjarke Frellesvig (Hertford) | Dr Sandra Paoli (Balliol) |
| Dr Jan Fellerer (Wolfson) | Dr Stephen Parkinson (Linacre) |
| Dr Gianluca Giorgolo | Prof Stephen Pulman (Somerville) |
| Dr Matthew Husband (St Hugh's) | Dr Elinor Payne (St Hilda's) |
| Dr Kerstin Hoge (St Hilda's) | Dr John Charles Smith (St Catherine's) |
| Dr Stephen Horn (Hertford) | Dr Rosalind Temple (New College) |
| Dr Jieun Kiaer (Hertford) | Dr Susanne Wagner (Oriel) |
| Prof Aditi Lahiri (Somerville) | Dr Ian Watson (Christ Church) |

| Papers | |
|---|------------------|
| Paper A: Linguistic Theory (MSt & MPhil 1 st year) | 20 |
| Paper A: Linguistic Theory (MPhil 2 nd year) | 14 |
| | MPhil/MSt |
| B(i) Phonetics and Phonology | 4/0 |
| B(ii) Syntax (essay) | 8/1 |
| B(iii) Semantics (essay) | 3/4 |
| B(iv) Historical and Comparative Linguistics | 2/2 |
| B(vi) History and Structure of German | 1/0 |
| B(vi) History and Structure of the English | 3/1 |
| B(vii) Experimental Phonetics (report) | 5/1 |
| B(vii) Psycholinguistics & Neurolinguistics (report) | 4/1 |
| B(viii) Sociolinguistics (extended essay) | 2/3 |
| B(ix) Computational Linguistics | 2/2 |

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| B(xi) Morphology | 1/0 |
| B(xi) Structure of Korean | 1/0 |
| B(xi) Comparative Slavonic Philology | 1/0 |
| D(i) Structure of Japanese | 1/0 |
| D(ii) History of Japanese | 1/0 |
| D(iii) Translation/commentary, texts in Japanese | 1/0 |
| Word Englishes | 2/0 |

Theses topics

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| | MPhil Theses |
| 1. | Information Structure and the omission of personal pronouns in Colloquial Russian |
| 2. | Syntactic Prediction in Italian |
| 3. | Towards a Phonology of Hrusso Aka |
| 4. | Interaction of Voicing and Vowel length in English - a perceptual investigation |
| 5. | Morphology of English Past Participles: history, structure, and form and meaning |
| 6. | Bermudian English |
| 7. | Verbal number in Meriam Mir |
| 8. | The acquisition of phonetic cues for voiceless consonants in British English |
| 9. | Intersective, non-intersective and privative adjectives in compositional distributional semantics |
| 10. | Long-term development in Japanese morphology |
| 11. | Language mixing in German-American bilingual adolescents in Berlin |
| 12. | Hidden Morphology: processing and decomposition of German complex nouns |
| 13. | Patterns of Phonetic Shift in Multicultural London English |
| | MSt Thesis (optional) |
| 1. | Orthographic neologism detection and analysis in Korean |

Results

Marking was unproblematic; as in previous years, markers were provided with mark sheets for theses and papers. The external Examiner looked at all the scripts and theses and gave an opinion on a selection of them; in all cases his opinions fell within the range of the other markers.

Four MSt candidates and nine MPhil candidates were awarded overall distinction marks. One MPhil candidate's marks received minor adjustment in the light of special circumstances.

Theses

Eleven MPhil theses out of thirteen obtained a mark in the distinction range, with one mark of 90 for a dissertation which was considered by the Examiners to be publishable. It clearly met our criteria: "Work which consistently exceeds expectations and challenges received views. An outstanding performance, which shows remarkable knowledge and understanding of the material." None of the MPhil theses failed.

Vivas & Failures

Three candidates (1 MPhil 2nd year, 1 MPhil resit and 1 MPhil 1st year) were called in for viva on Paper A. The 2nd year MPhil candidate had received distinction marks overall and

the negative performance in Paper A was surprising. During the viva, the candidate successfully responded to examiners' questions and the mark was raised to a pass mark. The 1st year MPhil candidate was unfortunately not successful. The performance at the viva did not satisfy the examiners who recommended that the candidate resat Paper A next year.

The candidate who had failed the MPhil last year and repeated Paper A as well as two option papers, passed the latter but failed the theoretical paper. The candidate was called in for a viva on Paper A. Unfortunately, the performance in the viva was such that the Examiners felt that the Paper A mark could not be increased. However, since the candidate had substantially improved marks on the two option papers, following guidance from the Proctor's, it was decided to offer the candidate an MSt.

Finally, one MPhil candidate had poor marks in two option papers and the thesis but was successful in Paper A and the third option paper. The Examiners felt that there was no value in calling the candidate in for a viva since it was not possible to orally examine a student on more than two papers. The case was considered in detail by the Examiners, and it was decided that the candidate's marks were sufficient to obtain an MSt where an overall mark of 60 was required for a pass. The Examiners agreed to suggest that the candidate should be offered an MSt since it would be extremely difficult to resit three papers next year.

The George Wolf Prize in Linguistics and Philology was awarded to the best MPhil candidate, who had achieved distinction marks in all the papers and an exceptionally high mark in the thesis. This candidate's performance in the taught modules as well as in the thesis amply deserved special recognition.

3. General remarks

Overall, the entire examination process went smoothly. This was the first year Paper A was sat by MPhil 1st year students and the structure of the paper had altered. Although the marks were not outstanding (only one candidate received a mark over 70), the Examiners felt that the Paper A marks were not especially different from the MSt students (who sat the same paper and three out of eight received a mark over 70). It was noted that the marks fell within the same range as the MPhil 2nd year students, where only one candidate received a mark above 70 in Paper A.

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