

## Language Variation and Change (A001770)

**Course size** *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

**Credits 6.0**

**Study time 180 h**

**Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2024-2025**

A (semester 1)

English

Gent

seminar

independent work

**Lecturers in academic year 2024-2025**

Magistro, Giuseppe

LW06

lecturer-in-charge

**Offered in the following programmes in 2024-2025**

[Master of Arts in Historical Linguistics and Literature](#)

6

A

[Master of Arts in Advanced Studies in Linguistics \(main subject Linguistics in a Comparative Perspective\)](#)

6

A

[Master of Arts in Advanced Studies in Linguistics \(main subject Linguistics in a Comparative Perspective\)](#)

6

A

**Teaching languages**

English

**Keywords**

variational linguistics, language change

**Position of the course**

The course aims at providing students with a sound understanding of:

- the relation between language variation and the language system, with examples taken from different languages.

- language variation as a mirror of language change.

- theories, models and methods concerning the analysis of spatial and social variation and diachronic change.

The lecturer of this course will be Giuseppe Magistro.

**Contents**

This course deals with language variation and change with particular focus on syntactic variation and change. It consists of two larger components: a theoretical part which is mainly organised around discussing seminal literature on language variation and change, and an empirical research project studying a chosen syntactic change with the help of a parsed corpus (for selected languages; possible choices a.o.: English, French, Portuguese, Icelandic, Old and Middle Low German, Chinese). The work with parsed corpora will be taught using video and text tutorials, as well as one practical session.

**Initial competences**

Master in a linguistic discipline or other certificate which guarantees a sufficient scientific previous knowledge in linguistics.

**Final competences**

1 To have a thorough insight into the structure of language variation and language change.

2 To be able to apply both theories and methodologies to new research designs.

3 Academic writing skills.

**Conditions for credit contract**

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

**Conditions for exam contract**

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

### Teaching methods

Seminar, Independent work

### Extra information on the teaching methods

- independent work/guided independent study: preparation of weekly readings, discussion in class
- guided exercises: working with parsed historical corpora

### Study material

None

### References

(for orientation, reading list may change.)

- Bermúdez-Otero, Ricardo. 2007. Diachronic phonology. In De Lacy, Paul (ed.) *The Cambridge handbook of phonology*, 497-517. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Biberauer, Theresa, Michelle Sheehan & Glenda Newton. 2010. Impossible changes and impossible borrowings: the Final-Over-Final Constraint. In Anne Breitbarth, Christopher Lucas, Sheila Watts & David Willis (eds.), *Continuity and Change in Grammar*, 35-60. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Deo, Ashwini. 2015. Diachronic Semantics. *Annual Review of Linguistics* 1:179-97. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-linguist-030514-125100>.
- Taylor, Anne. 2020. Treebanks in historical syntax. *Annual Review of Linguistics* 6:195-212 <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-011619-030515>
- Walkden, George & Anne Breitbarth. 2019. Complexity as L2-Difficulty: Implications for Syntactic Change. *Theoretical Linguistics* 45(3-4): 183-209
- Weinreich, Uriel, William Labov & Marvin I. Herzog. 1968. Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change. In Winfred P. Lehmann and Yakov Malkiel (eds.), *Directions for Historical Linguistics*, 95-195. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Yang, Charles. 2000. Internal and external forces in language change. *Language Variation and Change* 12: 231-250.

### Course content-related study coaching

Individually, during and after class.

### Assessment moments

continuous assessment

### Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

### Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

### Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Assignment

### Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

### Extra information on the examination methods

Paper (report on own research project). A second chance is possible.

### Calculation of the examination mark

Paper: 100%.

### Facilities for Working Students

The student has to report on a set list of literature and has to write a paper.

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy (<https://www.ugent.be/student/nl/administratie/flexibel-studeren>)