GHENT UNIVERSITY

Course Specifications

Valid as from the academic year 2024-2025

General Linguistics: Theoretical Linguistics (A000947)

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

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Willems, Klaas	LW06	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027	**crdts**	**offering**

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Language theory, linguistic methodology, syntax/semantics interface, linguistic typology, theories of meaning, linguistic epistemology.

Position of the course

– To gain insight, from the point of view of general linguistics, into several important linguistic disciplines and into the methods and concepts they use.
– To be able to evaluate the relative achievements as well as restrictions of different linguistic models.
- To gain insight into typologically diverse language data.

Contents

In this course the emphasis is on synchronic language studies and language theory, including the development of methods in contemporary linguistic research. The disciplines that are studied from the point of view of general linguistics and language theory are: semantics (psycholinguistic, cognitive, functional and generative approaches, including their relation with pragmatics) and syntax (viz. current trends in the study of sentence hierarchy: syntactic typology and case theory). The classes revolve around the critical analysis of various methods and hypotheses found in some of the prominent theories and models in current linguistics, which are applied from a comparative perspective to typologically diverse language data.

Initial competences

Students are familiar with general linguistic concepts (cf. General linguistics: Theories and methods or General linguistics: History of the language sciences in the Bachelor programme)

Final competences

1 have excellent knowledge of linguistic disciplines, esp. theoretical linguistics (Ghent University Competence Model: 1.1),
2 have developed the scientific skill to evaluate and discuss different linguistic theories and methodologies (1.1),
3 are trained in comparing structuralist theories and methods with functional and cognitive theories and methods in linguistics (1.1, 1.5),
4 have developed the skill to analyse and interpret data from an array of typologically diverse languages by means of present-day linguistic concepts (2.3),
5 are well-versed in contextualising and explaining important current linguistic

concepts such as meaning, reference, sense, categorisation, sentence hierarchy, construction, case, valency, grammatical typology (e.g. ergativity), implicature, compositionality, etc. (2.3, 2.4, 2.5).

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Extra information on the teaching methods

seminar, with weekly readings of linguistic articles and discussion in class

Study material

None

References

(Selection)

- S. Glucksberg (2003), “The Psycholinguistics of Metaphor”. In: *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* **7**, 92-96.
- A. Sanford and P. Sturt (2002), "Depth of processing in language comprehension". In: *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* **6**, 382-386.
- Frisson, S. (2009). “Semantic underspecification in language processing”. *Language and Linguistic Compass* **3**, 111-127.
- Ferreira, F. et al. (2002), "Good-enough representations in language comprehension". In: *Current Directions in Psychological Science* **11**, 11-15.
- J. Taylor (2002), “Compositionality”. In: J. Taylor, *Cognitive Grammar*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2002), pp. 97-109.
- Pustejovsky, James (2002). "Syntagmatic processes". In: David Alan Cruse, Franz Hundsnurscher, Michael Job & Peter Rolf Lutzeier, *Lexikologie/Lexicology*. Vol. 1 (Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissen-schaft 21). Berlin & New York: W. de Gruyter, 565-570.
- Haspelmath, Martin (2003). "The geometry of grammatical meaning: semantic maps and cross-linguistic comparison". In: Tomasello, Michael (ed.) *The New Psychology of Language*, vol. 2. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 211-243.
- Evans, N. (2005). Some distinctive characteristics of the vocabulary of Australian languages. In: David Alan Cruse, Franz Hundsnurscher, Michael Job & Peter Rolf Lutzeier, *Lexikologie/Lexicology*. Vol. 2 (Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissen-schaft 21). Berlin & New York: W. de Gruyter, 1076-1083.
- J. McCawley (1978), “Conversational implicature and the lexicon”. In: Peter Cole (ed.), *Semantics and syntax*. Vol. 9: *Pragmatics*. New York: Academic Press, 245-259.
- S. Levinson (2000). "On the notion of a Generalized Conversational Implicature". In: S. Levinson. *Presumptive Meanings. The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 12-42.
- Carston, R. (2012). Word meaning and concept expressed. *The Linguistic Review* **29**, 607-623.
- Hopper, P. & S. A. Thompson (1980). “Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse”. *Language* **56**, 251-299.
- Comrie, B. (2013). “Alignment of Case Marking of Full Noun Phrases”. In: M. Dryer & M. Haspelmath (eds.). *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online* (WALS, 2013), § 98.
- R. Dixon (1994), “Syntactically based and semantically based marking”. In: R. Dixon, *Ergativity*, Cambridge University Press (1994), 23-35.

Course content-related study coaching

This course is conceived as a Seminar. The lecturer introduces topics to be discussed in class. The discussions have the form of tutorial work in class and students can also speak to the lecturer on weekly office hours.

Assessment moments

end-of-term assessment

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

Oral assessment

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

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

The oral exam takes 30 minutes. There are eight open questions; the oral exam takes places after a written preparation for 30 minutes in an annex room. The exam is an opportunity for studentes to demonstrate theoretical knowledge and to conduct empirical analyses.

Calculation of the examination mark

Facilities for Working Students

Facilities:
1 Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance
2 Possible rescheduling of an oral examination to a different time in the same academic year
3 Feedback can be given by email
Extra information:
In case of exemption from educational activities, notes of fellow students are considered to be essential to fully understand the subject matter which is summarized in the syllabus
For more information contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy: https://www.ugent.be/lw/nl/student/studiestudentenbegeleiding/trajectbegeleiding.htm