GHENT UNIVERSITY

Course Specifications

Valid as from the academic year 2026-2027

Language and Cognition (A006748)

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

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2)	Dutch	Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Verroens, Filip	LW06	staff member
Willems, Klaas	LW06	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027	crdts	offering
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - English)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - French)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - German)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Greek)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Italian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Latin)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Scandinavian Studies)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Spanish)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - German)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Greek)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Italian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Latin)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Scandinavian Studies)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Spanish)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - English)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - German)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Greek)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Italian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Latin)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Scandinavian Studies)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Spanish)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Greek)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Italian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Scandinavian Studies)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Spanish)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Greek)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Iberian-Romance Languages)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Greek)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Italian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Scandinavian Studies)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Spanish)	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

General linguistics, close reading of texts, presentations and discussions, language as a form of cognition and linguistics as a cognitive science.

Position of the course

Students develop the skill to read and discuss high standard contributions (articles, book chapters etc.) to modern linguistics and to evaluate their content and value with a critical mindset.

Students develop the skill to investigate a subject related to language and cognition (broadly construed) from the point of view of general linguistics, based on extensive reading.

Students develop the skill to report on their research by delivering a paper in class (with a PowerPoint and a handout) and to participate in the ensuing discussions in class.

Contents

Over the last few decades, linguistic theorizing and methodology have been at the core of research from the point of view of general linguistics. This development is partly due to the many interdisciplinary issues that are involved in current historical and synchronic linguistic research (psychology and cognitive sciences, evolutionary biology, sociology, statistics and quantitative research, etc.). General linguistics has primarily focused on the relation between theory formation, methodology, the description and explanation of language data and discourse. In this course the students and the lecturer(s) read and discuss high standard articles on selected linguistic subjects in the domain of linguistics, with special attention to texts in which language is studied and analyzed as a window on the human mind, viz. cognition in the broad sense of the word (cf. G. A. Miller 2003, 'The Cognitive Revolution'). 'Cognition' entails, in this context, language and linguistics alike: while the relation between language and cognition has long been established, linguistics too is a form of cognition and therefore itself a subject of study within the borad area of 'language and cognition', broadly construed.
Students give a talk (the subject of the talk is chosen jointly with the lecturer). The paper is based on a survey of relevant texts or a case study, and deals with a specific subject in linguistics (either from a theoretical or an empirical perspective, or a combination of both). The reading list reflects the interests of the students and may cover all relevant aspects in historical and synchronic linguistics or linguistic theory since the 19th century. Presentations related to linguistic research carried out in the master's thesis are also welcome.
Possible topics (potential target articles in parentheses):

- Linguistic relativity: 'Thinking for speaking' (Slobin 2003, Levinson 2003a)
- Linguistic relativity: gender (Boroditsky 2003, Mickan et al. 2014), Samuel et al. 2019
- Linguistic relativity: space (Levinson 2003b, Majid et al. 2004)
- Linguistic relativity: time (Gerwien & Stutterheim 2002)
- Linguistic relativity: metaphors (Thibodeau & Boroditsky 2011, 2013, 2015)
- Linguistic relativity: colour terms (Regier & Kay 2006, 2009, Jameson & Webster 2019)
- Linguïstic relativity: second language acquisition (Pavlenko 2016, Stutterheim 2021)
- Iconicity in language: typology (Dingemanse et al. 2015, 2022, Motamedi et al. 2019)
- Iconicity in language: frequency and cognition (Haspelmath 2009)
- Language universals, linguistic diversity and cognition (Evans & Levinson 2009)
- Language acquisition and multilingualism: 'heritage languages' (Benmamoun et al. 2013, Montrul & Polinsky, eds. 2021)
- Language and linguistic anthropology (Kroskrity 2021, 2022)
- LLM's, GenAI, meaning and language understanding (Durt 2025)

Initial competences

Students are familiar with general linguistic concepts (cf. General linguistics:

Theories and methods). No further specific knowledge is required.

Final competences

1 Students apply specialized linguistic knowledge to critically analyze, evaluate and synthesize complex linguistic ideas and theories (Ghent University Competence Model: 1.1)
2 Students have excellent knowledge of the interdisciplinary relationship between linguistics and other scientific disciplines from the viewpoint of general linguistics (1.2)
3 Students have excellent insight in the historical and conceptual relations between the contributions of several important scholars in the domain of modern linguistics and adjacent disciplines (1.4)
4 Students are trained in evaluating, contextualising and explaining the relative achievements as well as restrictions of different empirical and theoretical points of view in linguistic research (1.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)
5 Students present their own analysis, synthesis and evaluation of linguistic issues both orally and in writing, in accordance with scientific rules and norms (4.1, 4.2)
6 Students discuss in a constructive manner about complex linguistic issues (4.1, 4.2)

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

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Presentation (individual or in pairs), preparing a Powerpoint and a handout, joint reading list, class discussions; presentations are given on campus.
No lecture recordings are provided for this course (interactive teaching format).
This course assumes the responsible use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). What this means will be explained during the lessons.

Study material

Type: Reader

Name: Articles Language and cognition
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Number of Pages : 200
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No

References

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Course content-related study coaching

This course is conceived as a Seminar with a focus on the close reading of texts.

The discussions have the form of tutorial work and students can also speak to the lecturer on weekly office hours.

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

Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is not possible

Extra information on the examination methods

The assessment is done on the basis of the talk delivered by the student (presentation and Powerpoint) and participation in class discussions.

Calculation of the examination mark

Talk: 80%, participation in class discussions: 20%.

Facilities for Working Students

Facilities:
1 Student attendance during educational activities is required
2 Feedback can be given by email
For more information contact the monitoring service of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy: https://www.ugent.be/lw/nl/student/studiestudentenbegeleiding/trajectbegeleiding.htm