

Language Documentation and Description in Africa (A003810)

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 1) Dutch, English Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

de Schryver, Gilles-Maurice LW21 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

| | crdts | offering |
|--|-------|----------|
| Bachelor of Arts in African Languages and Cultures | 5 | A |
| Exchange Programme African Languages and Cultures | 5 | A |
| Linking Course Master of Arts in African Studies | 5 | A |
| Preparatory Course Master of Arts in African Studies | 5 | A |
| Elective Set African Studies | 5 | A |
| Elective Set Linguistics | 5 | A |

Teaching languages

English, Dutch

Keywords

language endangerment, language death, language revitalization, language documentation, culture documentation, language description, archiving, dissemination, Bantu, Africa

Position of the course

This course provides a broad introduction to language documentation and description, a recent sub-discipline within linguistics, with special attention to the African languages. An international handbook is being used as guide (Boerger *et al.* 2020); during the classes the examples are taken from the experiences of the BantUGent research group.

Contents

- Part 1: Theory
 - Lesson 1 – Language endangerment, language death and language revitalization: What?
 - Lesson 2 – Language and culture documentation: What?
 - Lesson 3 – Themes, motivations and ethical aspects
- Part 2: A language and culture documentation project
 - Lesson 4 – Planning of a documentation project
 - Lesson 5 – The documentary corpus and archive
- Part 3: Equipment and software
 - Lesson 6 – Equipment
 - Lesson 7 – Software
- Part 4: Fieldwork
 - Lesson 8 – Data management and elicitation
 - Lesson 9 – Hands-on fieldwork I
 - Lesson 10 – Hands-on fieldwork II
 - Lesson 11 – Hands-on fieldwork III
- Part 5: Post-fieldwork processing
 - Lesson 12 – Archiving, description, publication and dissemination

Initial competences

Secondary school.

Final competences

A good understanding of what language documentation and description in Africa entail.

Conditions for credit contract

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

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture

Extra information on the teaching methods

Lessons 1 to 8, and Lesson 12: Ex-cathedra lecture

Lessons 9 to 11: Hands-on seminar

Lesson recordings exist for all classes: those from last year are automatically released after every class this year and are available to everyone. In principle, lesson recordings are also being made during this academic year.

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: Boerger et al. (2020)

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Online Available : Yes

Type: Slides

Name: own PowerPoint presentations

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Audiovisual Material

Name: own audio, photos and videos

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Other

Name: own equipment and software demonstrations

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Other

Name: BantUGent examples

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

Boerger, Brenda H., Sarah R. Moeller, Will Reiman & Stephen Self. 2020. *Language and Culture Documentation Manual*. <https://leanpub.com>: Leanpub.

Course content-related study coaching

Possibility to ask questions during and after class, via e-mail, and through Ufora.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

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

Written assessment

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

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Presentation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Calculation of the examination mark

continuous assessment based on active participation during the three fieldwork classes (25%) + written assessment on all theory during the examination period (75%)

Facilities for Working Students

Instead of being physically present during class, self-study of the handbook, in combination with the materials which are uploaded to Ufora following each lesson. Participate in the written exam like the regular students.