

Bantu Corpus Linguistics and Lexicography (A005117)

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

Credits 5.0

Study time 150 h

Course offerings in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 1)

English

Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

de Schryver, Gilles-Maurice

LW21

lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

Master of Science in Teaching in Languages (main subject African Languages and Cultures)

crdts

offering

5

A

Master of Arts in African Studies

5

A

Master of Arts in Advanced Studies in Linguistics (main subject Linguistics in a Comparative Perspective)

5

A

Exchange Programme African Languages and Cultures

5

A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Bantu languages, corpus linguistics, lexicography, data-driven language technology

Position of the course

This is an advanced course in which corpus linguistics for the Bantu languages as well as data-driven lexicography is introduced. Students acquire an in-depth knowledge of the methodologies, the tools, as well as the strengths and limitations of the analytical apparatus, and are invited to put the acquired knowledge into practice.

Contents

Corpus linguistics is a booming field, well covered in both basic textbooks (e.g. Biber *et al.* 1998, Kennedy 1998, McEnery & Wilson 2001) as well as in more advanced studies (e.g. McEnery *et al.* 2006, Renouf & Kehoe 2009, McEnery & Hardie 2012), which has largely been used to investigate the world's major languages (e.g. Sinclair 1991, Meyer 2002, O'Keeffe & McCarthy 2010). However, even in collections which aim at sampling the world's languages, the result deals largely with European languages (e.g. Wilson *et al.* 2006). The same can, mutatis mutandis, be said about data-driven lexicography. In this advanced course this status quo is challenged by focusing on corpus linguistics and lexicography for the Bantu language family. Given the state of the discipline, results from the wider field of African language technology (De Pauw *et al.* 2006-16) are also brought in. Each class consists of two parts. In the first a topic from the list below is considered, and in the second the newly acquired knowledge is immediately put into practice on the computer.

- Class 1 – **Bantu CORPORA: What, how and use?** (de Schryver & Prinsloo 2000a, de Schryver 2002)
- Class 2 – **SOFTWARE for Bantu corpus linguistics and data-driven lexicography** (Scott 1996-2016, Joffe 2002-16, de Schryver & De Pauw 2007)
- Class 3 – **Bantu corpus APPLICATIONS: Fundamental research, teaching and language learning** (Prinsloo & de Schryver 2001)
- Class 4 – **Bantu SPELLCHECKERS: non-word error detection** (Prinsloo & de Schryver 2003)
- Class 5 – **Bantu corpus TERMINOGRAPHY** (Taljad & de Schryver 2002)

- Class 6 – **Bantu corpus-based TRANSLATION studies** (Gauton *et al.* 2003)
- Class 7 – **Bantu corpus LEXICOGRAPHY 1: Basic aspects** (de Schryver & Prinsloo 2000b, 2000c)
- Class 8 – **Bantu corpus LEXICOGRAPHY 2: Advanced aspects** (de Schryver & Joffe 2004, de Schryver *et al.* 2006)
- Class 9 – **Bantu corpus LINGUISTICS 1: Synchronic aspects** (de Schryver & Nabirye 2010)
- Class 10 – **Bantu corpus LINGUISTICS 2: Diachronic aspects** (de Schryver & Gauton 2002)
- Class 11 – **Bantu corpus LINGUISTICS 3: Strengths** (Kawalya *et al.* 2014)
- Class 12 – **Bantu corpus LINGUISTICS 4: Limitations** (Bostoen & de Schryver 2015)

Through state-of-the-art literature students are able to familiarize themselves with the early stages, development, and current use of data-driven methods in Bantu linguistics and lexicography. The differences with other approaches to data collection, data analysis and data synthesis (including questionnaires, stimuli, grammaticality judgement tests, introspection and intuition) are also given due attention.

Knowledge of Bantu languages or other African languages is an advantage, but not a prerequisite to follow this course. Each week students are asked to read one or more journal articles or book chapters as preparation for the lesson. The contents of these articles and chapters are discussed during class and put in a broader perspective.

Initial competences

'Bachelor in African Languages and Cultures', 'Bachelor in Linguistics', or equivalent.

Final competences

An advanced knowledge and understanding of Bantu corpus linguistics and lexicography.

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

Study material

Type: Reader

Name: Scholarly articles and book chapters are provided on the Ufora course site.

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : Yes

Available in the Library : Yes

References

- Biber, D., Conrad, S. & Reppen, R. 1998. *Corpus Linguistics: Investigating Language Structure and Use* (Cambridge Approaches to Linguistics). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bostoen, K. & de Schryver, G.-M. 2015. 'Linguistic innovation, political centralization and economic integration in the Kongo kingdom: Reconstructing the spread of prefix reduction'. *Diachronica* 32,2: 139–85 + 13 pages of supplementary material online.
- De Pauw, G., de Schryver, G.-M. & Wagacha, P.W. 2006-16. *AfLaT - African Language Technology*. Retrieved from <http://aflat.org/>.
- de Schryver, G.-M. 2002. 'Web for/as corpus: A perspective for the African languages'. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 11,2: 266–82.
- de Schryver, G.-M. & De Pauw, G. 2007. 'Dictionary writing system (DWS) + corpus query package (CQP): The case of TshwaneLex'. *Lexikos* 17: 226–46.

- de Schryver, G.-M. & Gauton, R. 2002. 'The Zulu locative prefix ku- revisited: A corpus-based approach'. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 20,4: 201–20.
- de Schryver, G.-M. & Joffe, D. 2004. 'On How Electronic Dictionaries are Really Used'. In G. Williams & S. Vessier (eds), *Proceedings of the Eleventh EURALEX International Congress, EURALEX 2004, Lorient, France, July 6-10, 2004*. Lorient: Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, Université de Bretagne Sud, pp. 187–96.
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- de Schryver, G.-M. & Nabirye, M. 2010. 'A quantitative analysis of the morphology, morphophonology and semantic import of the Lusoga noun'. *Africana Linguistica* 16: 97–153.
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- Joffe, D. 2002-16. *tlCorpus - Concordance Software*. Retrieved from <http://tshwanedje.com/corpus/>.
- Kawalya, D., Bostoen, K. & de Schryver, G.-M. 2014. 'Diachronic semantics of the modal verb -sóból- in Luganda: A corpus-driven approach'. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 19,1: 60–93.
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- Wilson, A., Archer, D. & Rayson, P. (eds). 2006. *Corpus Linguistics around the World*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Course content-related study coaching

Feedback during and after class, via e-mail, and through the Ufora course site

(Approved)

Assessment moments

continuous assessment

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

Assignment

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

Assignment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Calculation of the examination mark

50% permanent evaluation (class participation, advance reading of provided literature)

50% research paper in which the in-depth knowledge of Bantu corpus linguistics and data-driven lexicography that was acquired in this course is applied to one or more Bantu languages of the student's choice (minimum 6000 words, maximum 10,000 words, excluding references and addenda)

Facilities for Working Students

None: hands-on participation is required.