

Language and cognition (A005389)

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

Credits 5.0

Study time 150 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2024-2025

A (semester 2)

Dutch

Gent

independent work
seminar

Lecturers in academic year 2024-2025

Verroens, Filip

LW06

staff member

Willems, Klaas

LW06

lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2024-2025

crdts

offering

Master of Science in Teaching in Languages(main subject Linguistics and Literature)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - English)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - French)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - German)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Greek)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Italian)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Latin)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Scandinavian Studies)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Spanish)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - German)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Greek)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Italian)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Latin)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Scandinavian Studies)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Spanish)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - English)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - German)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Greek)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Italian)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Latin)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Scandinavian Studies)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Spanish)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Greek)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Italian)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Scandinavian Studies)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Spanish)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Greek)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Iberian-Romance Languages)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Greek)
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Italian)

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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
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Scandinavian Studies)	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 broad 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)
- Linguistic 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 acquisition and the lexicon (Webb 2021)
- Language and cultural anthropology (Kroskrity 2021, 2022, Musolf 2022)
- Language development (Tomasello 2008)

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, as a rule classes and presentations are not recorded.

Study material

None

References

- Benmamoun, E., S. Montrul & M. Polinsky (2013). Heritage languages and their speakers: Opportunities and challenges for linguistics. *Theoretical Linguistics* 39, 129-181.
- Boroditsky, L. L. A. Schmidt & W. Phillips (2003). Sex, syntax, and semantics. In: Dedre Gentner & Susan Goldin-Meadow (eds.), *Language in mind: Advances in the study of language and thought*, 61-79. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Dingemanse, M., D. E. Blasi, G. Lupyan, M. H. Christiansen & P. Monaghan (2015). Arbitrariness, iconicity, and systematicity in language. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 19, 603-615.
- Dingemanse, M., M. Perlman & P. Perniss (2020). Construals of iconicity: experimental approaches to form-meaning resemblances in language *Language and Cognition* 12(1), 1-14.
- Evans, N. & S. Levinson. (2009). The myth of language universals: Language diversity and its importance for cognitive science. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 32, 429-448.
- Gerwien, J. & C. von Stutterheim (2022). Conceptual Blending Across Ontological Domains—References to Time and Space in Motion Events by Tunisian Arabic Speakers of L2 German. *Frontiers in Communication: Language Science* 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2022.856805>
- Haspelmath, M. (2009). Frequency vs. iconicity in explaining grammatical asymmetries. *Cognitive Linguistics* 19, 1-33.
- Haspelmath, M. (2010). Comparative concepts and descriptive categories in crosslinguistic studies. *Language* 86, 663-687.
- Jameson, K. & M. Webster (2019). Color and culture: Innovations and insights since Basic Color Terms - Their Universality and Evolution. *Color Research and Application* 44, 1034-1041.
- Kay P. & T. Regier (2006). Language, thought and color: recent developments. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 10, 51-54.
- Kroskrity, P. (2021). Covert Linguistic Racisms and the (Re-)Production of White Supremacy. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 31(2), 180-193.
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- Levinson, S. C. (2003a). Language and mind; let's get the issues straight. In D. Gentner & S. Goldin-Meadow (Eds.), *Language in Mind: Advances in the study of language and thought*, 25-44. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Levinson, S. C. (2003b). Space in language and cognition: explorations in cognitive diversity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Majid, A., M. Bowerman, S. Kita, D. B. M. Haun & S. C. Levinson (2004). Can language

restructure cognition? The case for space. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 8, 108–114.

Mickan, A., M. Schiefke & A. Stefanowitsch (2014). Key is a llave is a Schlüssel: A failure to replicate an experiment from Boroditsky et al. 2003. *Yearbook of the German Cognitive Linguistics Association* 2:1, 39–50.

Montamédi, Y. et al. (2019). The iconicity toolbox: empirical approaches to measuring iconicity. *Language and Cognition* 11, 188–207.

Montrul, S. & M. Polinsky (eds.) (2021). *The Cambridge handbook of heritage languages and linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Musolff, A. (2022) "World-beating" Pandemic Responses: Ironical, Sarcastic, and Satirical Use of War and Competition Metaphors in the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic. *Metaphor and Symbol* 37(2), 76–87.

Pavlenko, A. (2016). Whorf's lost argument: multilingual awareness. *Language Learning. A journal of research in language studies* 66, 581–607.

Regier T. & P. Kay (2009). Language, thought, and color: Whorf was half right. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 13, 439–446.

Samuel, S., G. Cole & M. Eacott (2019). Grammatical gender and linguistic relativity: A systematic review. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 26, 1767–1786.

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Slobin, D. I. (2003). Language and thought online: Cognitive consequences of linguistic relativity. In D. Gentner & S. Goldin-Meadow (Eds.), *Language in mind: Advances in the investigation of language and thought*, 157–191. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Stutterheim, C. von, M. Lambert & J. Gerwien (2021). Limitations on the role of frequency in L2 acquisition. *Language and Cognition* 13, 291–321.

Thibodeau, P. & L. Boroditsky (2011). Metaphors we think with: The role of metaphor in reasoning. *PLoS ONE*, 6(2), e16782.

Thibodeau, P. & L. Boroditsky (2013). Natural language metaphors covertly influence reasoning. *PLoS ONE*, 8(1), e52961.

Thibodeau, P. & L. Boroditsky (2015). Measuring effects of metaphor in a dynamic opinion landscape. *PLoS ONE*, 10(7): e0133939.

Thibodeau, P., R. Hendricks & L. Boroditsky (2017). How linguistic metaphor scaffolds reasoning. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 21, 852–863.

Tomasello, M. (2008). *Origins of Human Communication*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Webb, S. (2021). The Lemma Dilemma. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 43(5), 941–949.

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>