

Syntax, Case and Lexicon (A006627)

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)

English

Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Bardagil Mas, Bernat

LW06

lecturer-in-charge

Barddal, Johanna

LW06

co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

[Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature\(main subject Linguistics\)](#)

crdts

offering

5

A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

syntax, lexicon, typology, case, alignment

Position of the course

The course provides a specialization in the study of grammatical case from both a comparative and a typological perspective, as well as its place in theoretical approaches focused on the lexicon and syntax.

Contents

In this course we will investigate grammatical case, a hotly debated issue in descriptive and theoretical linguistics, by adopting a contrastive and typological perspective. What are the reasons why languages mark elements with case, and what are the attested ways in which different languages manifest case? Why, and how, do other languages present no grammatical case? We will pay attention to the manifestations of case and the proposed analyses in a wide typological and areal range of languages spanning from Europe and Asia to the Amazon and Australia. The overview of existing theoretical approaches will be complemented with different hypotheses on case assignment and its morphological patterns, and the corresponding syntactic structures. Several types of phenomena and analyses of grammatical case will be explored by means of case studies, such as alignment typology, hierarchy effects, differential case marking, or the diachrony of case systems. Each student will be asked to write a small comparative study, presented both orally and in a written paper, either by picking a language of their choice and analyzing the morphological and syntactic patterns of case marking in this language, or by focusing on a specific phenomenon related to case with a wider comparative approach.

Initial competences

Previous knowledge of linguistics at master's level is required.

Final competences

- 1 Assess highly specialized scientific articles in the field of syntax
- 2 Reconstruct and assess an argumentation in the field of syntax
- 3 Assess linguistic hypotheses formulated scientifically
- 4 Apply language-specific hypotheses to other languages
- 5 Build a linguistic argumentation
- 6 Evaluate the relevance of data with respect to a hypothesis

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

The seminars consist of discussions of scientific articles.

The guided tutorial consists of the reading of scientific articles, which are commented and discussed in class.

Study material

None

References

- Barðdal, Jóhanna. 2009. The Development of Case in Germanic. The Role of Semantic, Pragmatic and Discourse Factors in the Development of Case, ed. by J. Barðdal & S. L. Chelliah, 123–159. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Barðdal, Jóhanna, Thomas Smitherman, Valgerður Bjarnadóttir, Serena Danesi, Gard B. Jensen & Barbara McGillivray. 2012. Reconstructing Constructional Semantics: The Dative Subject Construction in Old Norse-Icelandic, Latin, Ancient Greek, Old Russian and Old Lithuanian. *Studies in Language* 36(3): 511–547.
- Butt, Miriam. 2009. Modern Approaches to Case: An Overview. The Oxford Handbook of Case, ed. by A. Malchukov & A. Spencer, 27–43. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 2009. Terminology of Case. The Oxford Handbook of Case, ed. by A. Malchukov & A. Spencer, 505–517. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Li, Yen-hui Audrey. 2022. The Case for Case in Chinese. In The Cambridge Handbook of Chinese Linguistics, Chu-Ren Huang, Yen-Hwei Lin, I-Hsuan Chen, and Yu-Yin Hsu (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 467–85.
- Luraghi, Silvia and Kittilä, Seppo. 2014. Typology and diachrony of partitive case markers. In Silvia Luraghi and Tuomas Huomo (eds.) Partitive Cases and Related Categories. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton: 17–62.
- Nichols, Jóhanna. 1986. Head-marking and dependent-marking grammar. *Language* 62, 1, 56–119.
- Other references will be provided during the classes.

Course content-related study coaching

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

Presentation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

Students write a paper on a chosen topic that is closely related to the theme of the course.

The students deliver short presentations on certain constructions in the language of their choice.

Calculation of the examination mark