

French Linguistics: Syntax and Semantics (A006669)

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) French Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Lauwers, Peter LW06 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Languages(main subject Linguistics and Literature)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - French)	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
Exchange Programme Linguistics and Literature	5	A

Teaching languages

French

Keywords

Syntax, semantics, lexicon, word classes, mass/count

Position of the course

This course aims to deepen the knowledge of methods in contemporary linguistic research, particularly as regards the syntax, the semantics, the lexicon and their mutual relationships. It focuses on acquiring analytical skills and scientific argumentation, more specifically w.r.t. phenomena related to category change.

Contents

The course deals with what one might trivially call "atypical uses" of words and consists of two modules:

1. The mass/count distinction and atypical uses of nouns in this respect. This module, which is situated within one single word class, viz. the nominal class, deals with the semantic and formal distinction between count (e.g. a table) and mass nouns (e.g. water), the question of its semantic motivation, and the way in which the distinction is realized in the lexicon. Special attention is paid to words that are primarily count or mass, but which are used atypically in the other class (e.g. un chat / en Chine on mange du chat). These shifts lead to a theoretical reflection in which concepts such as polysemy and coercion are discussed. In line with the mass/count distinction, lexical plurals (pluralia tantum, often called "mass plurals"), such as épinards and vivres, are also included.

2. Atypical use of words with the syntax of an unexpected word class. Words can be used in a different class than the one to which they are primarily associated, whether in creative language or not. Special attention will be paid to nouns that are used adjectively (la prof est vache) and adjectives that are used nominally (on

peut faire du beau avec du simple). These phenomena show the tension between word class and function (syntax) and exhibit different degrees of lexicalisation. Throughout the different modules, the students increase their vocabulary, partly through creative language. During the course, they regularly take the floor to express their opinion on the analysis of language structures. They also give an oral presentation and write a written (at the C1 proficiency level).

Initial competences

The course links up with "French linguistics I". The language proficiency level is C1.

Final competences

- 1 students are able to analyse atypic usages of words by means of a flexible criteriology and to interpret them in the light of categorial hybridity situated on the lexis-grammar interface
- 2 students are able to analyse new data by means of an existing analytical grid
- 3 students master (passively) lesser known and creative usages of words in contemporary French
- 4 to build linguistic argumentations on the basis of descriptive criteria
- 5 to gain insight in the theoretical problems related to categories on the basis of comparison of different approaches
- 6 students are aware of the pitfalls of direct projections on language of categories used to structure reality
- 7 students have notions of how languages differ with respect to the realization of categories such as word classes and mass/count (occasional typological digressions)
- 8 students are able to present an academic presentation (at C1 level) about the subject matter and are sufficiently proficient in academic writing

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

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Group work, Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

This course assumes the responsible use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI).

During the lessons, what this means will be explained.

No course recordings (interactive teaching).

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: slides and handouts

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : Other

Number of Slides : 300

Oldest Usable Edition : 2026-2027

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Collection of articles

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : Other

Number of Pages : 100

Oldest Usable Edition : 2026-2027

Available on Ufora : Yes

Additional information: This list of articles is partly optional, in the sense that some articles are only meant to support the content discussed during the course. Students who were present in class and took notes do not need to read those articles.

References

Course content-related study coaching

guidance of team work by the courseholder, first in class, then individually by appointment (live or via Ms Teams)

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

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

Oral assessment

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

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

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 (per 2), in which they discuss a corpus study of 4 nouns in light of their countable/non-countable use. Individual guidance by the course holder is provided.

The final exam is an oral exam (with open book) and focuses on the application of the analytical framework on a series of examples. Throughout the dialogue between teacher and student, it is checked whether the student has a sufficient understanding of the subject matter. Knowledge of the vocabulary discussed throughout the course is also checked. Towards the end of the exam, the paper is also discussed. The oral language proficiency of the student forms an integral part of the assessment.

Students who failed the exam have to resubmit their assignment (non-periodic evaluation), on an individual basis, if they also failed the assignment. Students who already were successful have to possibility to do even better. The best score will be retained;

Calculation of the examination mark

The periodic evaluation counts for 60% and the non-periodic evaluation for 40%.

Facilities for Working Students

1. Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance.
2. The oral exam can be rescheduled
3. Alternative time for feedback is possible

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy

No course recordings (interactive teaching).