

Information session on master courses in linguistics

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1. Introduction

- 5 classes in linguistics are offered
 - 3 are **synchronic** in nature
 - Linguistique synchronique anglaise a : English corpus linguistics (A. Van linden)
 - Linguistique synchronique anglaise b : Construction grammar and its application to English (L. Brems)
 - Linguistique synchronique anglaise c : Cognitive and functional linguistic approaches (A. Van linden)
 - 2 are **diachronic** in nature
 - Linguistique diachronique anglaise a : An introduction to grammaticalization (L. Brems)
 - Linguistique diachronique anglaise b : Approaches and perspectives in English historical linguistics (L. Brems)

Linguistique synchronique anglaise a : English corpus linguistics

- First class: Mon 29/9, 11am-1pm
- Corpus linguistics: not a particular linguistic paradigm or discipline on a par with sociolinguistics or psycholinguistics.
- Corpus linguistics is more a way of doing linguistics, “a methodological basis for pursuing linguistic research” (Leech 1992: 105) = methodology
- Main object of inquiry for the corpus linguist: the corpus
 - A corpus is a systematic, random collection of written texts or transcribed spontaneous spoken language (a large, principled collection of naturally occurring texts)
 - used for linguistic research
 - typically available in computer-readable form
- Corpora allow us to inquire into linguistic phenomena that are not intuitively accessible → frequency of use, rare or atypical uses, regional differences, social differences, genre or register variation and historical change

Linguistique synchronique anglaise a : English corpus linguistics

Contents:

- Introduction into corpus linguistics
 - Corpus design: the planning and creation of a corpus (corpus compilation, corpus annotation, and corpus architecture)
 - Corpus methods (corpus searching, frequency lists, keywords lists, concordance, collocations, analysing corpus data)
 - Corpus types (diachronic corpora, spoken corpora, parallel corpora, learner corpora, child language corpora, web corpora, and multimodal corpora)
 - Statistical analyses: exploratory techniques & hypothesis-testing acquiring literacy in basic statistics rather than hands-on practice
- Hands-on exercises on retrieving corpus examples and analysing them
- Reading articles based on corpus studies:
 - Learn about designing case-studies, selecting corpora, defining analytical parameters + critical thinking: replicability?
 - Learn about how to report on corpus studies
 - Learn on how corpus studies contribute to linguistic theory formation: relationship between empirical studies of language and general linguistic theory

Linguistique synchronique anglaise a : English corpus linguistics

Evaluation methods:

- Students will have to **pair up** and:
 - carry out a **corpus study** on a topic of their choice within English linguistics
 - report on their findings in an **oral presentation**:
 - to be delivered during class hours
 - accounts for 5/20
 - write a **research essay**, integrating feedback from teacher and peers:
 - to be submitted on 10 January 2025 (Word and PDF versions; also submit Excel file with analysed corpus examples)
 - expected length: 5,000-8,000 words, excluding references
 - accounts for 15/20

Linguistique synchronique anglaise b :

Construction grammar and its application to English

- [Second term course](#), Monday 15.00-17.00 o'clock
- “**Framework** for the analysis of the general human capacity for language” (Hilpert 2014)
- A linguistic **theory**; still young, diverse and changing quickly: specific way of describing/explaining linguistic phenomena (specific focus, methodology, topics, etc.) and particular view on language and its organisation
- **Reaction** to generative grammar (among others), making the notion of construction central (*John sneezed the napkin off the table*)
- Less well definable than ‘phonetics’ and shares ideas with cognitive linguistics: family of constructionist approaches, rather than 1 unified theory, i.e. different strands (Fillmore, Kaye, Goldberg, Croft, etc.)

Linguistique synchronique anglaise b :

Construction grammar and its application to English

- Introduce you to this framework, applied to English
- Origins, shift in topics, interaction with other frameworks
- How is it different from other frameworks?
- What does it have in common with other frameworks?
- Focus on the more functional/cognitive kinds of construction grammar
- Look at advantages but also downsides of this type of framework
- Exam (written exam)
- Questions on terminology
- Open questions about larger topics
- exercises

Linguistique synchronique anglaise c :

Cognitive and functional linguistic approaches

Second term course, Monday 11am-1pm

Contents:

- Topics in English linguistics from a cognitive and functional perspective, as opposed to a formal or generative approach
 - Theoretical tenets of cognitive and functional theoretical frameworks
 - Research methods
- To contextualize these approaches: introduction into major theoretical approaches in Modern Western (general) linguistics (20th & 21st centuries)
- Specific topics:
 - noun incorporation, e.g. *crowd-surfing, baby-sitting*
 - modality as expressed by patterns with nouns, e.g. *there's no chance/doubt that ...*
 - pseudo-coordination, e.g. *they went and submitted the paper late!*

Linguistique synchronique anglaise c :

Cognitive and functional linguistic approaches

Evaluation methods:

- Students will have to **pair up** and carry out:
 - a **corpus study** on a topic of their choice within English linguistics
 - OR a **literature review** on a topic of their choice within English linguisticsin which they relate the topic meaningfully to cognitive and functional approaches
- report on their findings in an **oral presentation**:
 - to be delivered during class hours
 - accounts for 5/20
- report on their findings in a **research essay**, integrating feedback from teacher and peers on the oral presentation:
 - to be submitted on 10 June 2026 (Word and PDF versions; also submit Excel file with analysed corpus examples)
 - expected length: 5,000-8,000 words, excluding references
 - accounts for 15/20

Linguistique diachronique anglaise a : An introduction to grammaticalization

- [Second term course](#), Thursday 12.00-14.00 o'clock
- The course aims to provide insight into how processes of **language change** can be described and explained in English diachronic linguistics
- We specifically focus on one type of language change, viz. **grammaticalization**, and how the framework that studies it has evolved
- Grammaticalization can be defined as
- "the change whereby lexical terms and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions, and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions [secondary grammaticalization]." (Hopper & Traugott 2003: intro)

Linguistique diachronique anglaise a : An introduction to grammaticalization

- **Organization** of the course:
 - Introductory sessions on grammaticalization
 - Sessions on specific case studies

- **Evaluation** of the course:
 - A take-home exam
 - with a theoretical and more descriptive question to be completed in two weeks (min. 1,000 words per question)
 - You work on it alone
 - Participation will count for 3 marks out of 20:
 - read articles and formulate some interesting questions or comments (e.g. contradictions, links with other articles, your own opinion on theoretical issues or on the use of examples, etc.),
 - send your questions/reflections to me (lbrems@uliege.be) by Wednesday 12.00 o'clock at the latest
 - You lose marks when you do not send me questions

Linguistique diachronique anglaise b : Approaches and perspectives in English historical linguistics

- First class: September 29, 15.00-17.00 o'clock (5/6)
- English Historical Linguistics
- Studies English at one point in time in the past (synchronic)
- Studies how English has evolved over time (diachronic)
- Can study different levels of the language: lexicon, phonology, syntax....
- More traditional and newer approaches
- Focus on diachrony
- See how different frameworks interact with historical linguistics
- Illustrated with case studies

Linguistique diachronique anglaise b : Approaches and perspectives in English historical linguistics

- The history of 'the' English language
- Shifts within the discipline of English historical linguistics
- Internal and external points of view
- Causes of change/Principles of change
- Language contact
- Prescriptivism and language change

Linguistique diachronique anglaise b : Approaches and perspectives in English historical linguistics

- Not organized in terms of which levels of language change
- Not organized chronologically: OE, ME, EModE, LModE
- But organized per approach or framework and their focus and methodology
- Most contemporary: psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, historical dialectology, etc.

Linguistique diachronique anglaise b : Approaches and perspectives in English historical linguistics

- ‘ex cathedra’ classes where I explain frameworks
- Interactive sessions for which I might ask you to read an article in advance and send me questions
- Powerpoints posted after class on eCampus
- Written exam with more ‘closed’ as well as open questions and exercises