Master Linguistics
Leipzig University

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Linguistics Department
Leipzig University

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The master linguistics in Leipzig offers . . .

- . . . a consecutive programme with focus on the phonology, morphology and syntax of the world's languages
- . . . a combination of grammar theory, language typology and computational and experimental methods
- . . . instruction in a variety of theoretical approaches
- . . . involvement in the department's research activities at an early stage (e.g. as a student assistant)
- . . . support of students' early publications and the preparation of lectures at international conferences
- . . . access to guest lectures and block events by respected international researchers
- . . . an optimal preparation for a doctoral degree

Linguistic tradition in Leipzig

Linguists related to Leipzig:

- August Leskien; Doctorate (1864), Professorship (1876)
- Jan Baudouin de Courtenay; Doctorate (1870)
- Karl Brugmann; Doctorate (1871), Habilitation (1877), Professorship (1882)
- Ferdinand de Saussure; Doctorate (1880)
- Leonard Bloomfield; Studies (1913/1914)
- Manfred Bierwisch; Doctorate (1961)
- Rudolf Ruzicka; Doctorate (1956), Habilitation (1961), Professorship (1963)

Overall structure of the programme

Three main areas:

- Grammatical theory (phonology, morphology and syntax)
- Language typology
- Computational/experimental approaches to grammar

Phonology

Phonology:

- Main representative of staff: Jochen Trommer
- Various theoretical approaches (e.g., rule-based phonology, feature geometry, optimality theoretic phonology, autosegmental phonology, lexical phonology)
- In depth study of selected phonological processes at the segment level (e.g., assimilation or neutralization processes) and the supra-segmental level (e.g., metrics, prosody, lexical and grammatical tone, sentence intonation, syllable theory)

Morphology

Morphology:

- Main representatives of staff: Gereon Müller, Barbara Stiebels, Jochen Trommer, Maria Kouneli
- Theoretical (e.g., distributed morphology, paradigm function morphology, minimalist morphology, optimality theory), typological and/or experimental approaches to morphology
- In depth study of selected phenomena and processes in the areas of inflection and derivation (e.g., syncretism, allomorphy, reduplication, affix order, cyclicity)

Syntax

Syntax:

- Main representatives of staff: Gereon Müller, Gregory Kobele, Maria Kouneli, Fabian Heck
- Various theoretical approaches (e.g., principles and parameters, minimalist syntax, optimality theory, head-driven phrase structure grammar, categorial grammar)
- In depth study of selected phenomena, principles and dichotomies in syntactic theory (e.g., agreement, displacement, case, cylicity, locality, representation vs. derivation)

Typology

Typology:

- Main representative of staff: Barbara Stiebels
- Different methods of language typology (e.g., creation of typological samples, data analysis)
- In depth study of various phenomena from a typological perspective (e.g., control, word and morpheme order biases, morphological and syntactic aspects of mood, gender marking, agent focus, linker inventories, clausal embedding, diatheses)

Computational/experimental approaches

Computational/experimental approaches:

- Main representatives of staff: Gregory Kobele, Michael Frazier
- In depth study of the formal properties of linguistic theories (e.g., complexity of minimalist grammars and categorial grammars, or the interaction/relation of constraints, filters, and optimization)
- Development of parsing algorithms and investigation of the relation between parsing and grammar; prediction of actual linguistic behavior on the basis of abstract grammars

Formal details

Some formal details:

- The regular master programme lasts four semesters, comprising a whole of 120 CPs.
- One can enter the master in the winter semester and in the summer semester.
- Admission to the programme requires a bachelor in linguistics. (Applications based on another degree have to be approved by the examination committee of the department.)
- The programme leads to a master of arts degree (M.A.), which satisfies the prerequisites for admission to a doctoral programme
- Courses are taught in English. Entry requirements are English language skills at the B2 level (and knowledge of another foreign language at the B1 level).

Overview of modules

Three categories of modules:

- basic (or foundational) modules (10 CP each)
- advanced modules (10 CP each)
- special modules (10 CP each)
- final module (master's thesis, 30 CP)

Properties:

- All regular modules (basic and advanced) are compulsory elective ("Wahlpflichtmodule"), i.e., they are part of the department's pool of modules, from which students can chose. They can be freely combined.
- Regular modules usually take place in a four-semester cycle. Three to four of them are offered each semester.
- Special modules may be chosen from other departments at Leipzig University (max 20 CP; approvement of the examination committee required).

Foundational modules

Foundational modules:

- Phonology, Morphology, Syntax (04-046-2002)
- Semantics (04-046-2001)
- Empirical Methods (04-046-2033)

Purpose:

- provide a solid and elaborate basis for the master
- give students with a bachelor from other universities (with background in linguistics or other) the possibility to become familiar with the core material taught in the linguistics bachelor in Leipzig.

Advanced modules

Advanced modules:

- Morphology (04-046-2010)
- Phonology (segmental; 04-046-2013)
- Phonology (supra-segmental; 04-046-2014)
- Syntax (local; 04-046-2015)
- Syntax (non-local; 04-046-2016)
- Computational perspectives on grammar (04-046-2025)
- Grammatical perspectives on cognition (04-046-2026)
- Linguistic typology (04-046-2031)

Purpose:
The advanced modules constitute the core of the master in all three areas.

Special modules

Special modules:

- Research internship (04-046-2034)
- Language in focus (04-046-2035)
- Imported module

Purpose:

- practical reasearch activity within some linguistic research project (within or outside the department)
- study of one particular aspect of language in depth from different perspectives (theoretical, typological, formal)
- extension of the master to other areas (theoretically related or practically relevant)

Study plan

Study plan:

- Foundational modules are recommended for the first and second semester.
- The research internship should not be taken in the first semester.
- The master's thesis is usually written in the third and/or fourth semester.
- Otherwise, modules can be freely chosen (when offered) and combined.

And after the master . . .

. . . you may want to carry out a doctorate at our department. We offer doctoral positions

- as part of a research project (with third party funding)
- as part of the Research Training Group "Interaction of grammatical building blocks" (IGRA; only until 2022).

Research Unit "Cyclic Optimization":

- The new research unit (RU) "Cyclic Optimization" (financed by the DFG) will start on 1 October 2021 (and last for four years in the first phase).
- The RU consists of 8 projects, offering 10 PhD-positions distributed over different subprojects.
- Potential renewal of the RU (another four years in the second phase, depending on a positive evaluation by the DFG): 2025.

Advising

General:
For general questions about the programme, please contact Michael Frazier (subject advisory service, michael_dean.frazier_jr ät uni-leipzig.de).

Students council:
If you want to have information from the students' perspective, please address the students council ("Fachschaftsrat" FaRaLing; https://faralingleipzig.wordpress.com/).

Advising

Special advice:
If you have any questions about the possible specializations in the
programme, you can consult . . .

- Phonology: Jochen Trommer
  (jtrommer ät uni-leipzig.de)
- Morphology: Gereon Müller
  (gereon.mueller ät uni-leipzig.de)
- Syntax: Gereon Müller, Fabian Heck
  ({gereon.mueller, heck} ät uni-leipzig.de)
- Computational/experimental approaches: Gregory Kobele
  (gkobele ät uni-leipzig.de)
- Language typology: Barbara Stiebels
  (barbara.stiebels ät uni-leipzig.de)

Application

Application:
Applications must go to both the university (via the platforms Almaweb or Uniassist) and to the linguistics department.

Department of linguistics:
- 1 June (winter semester)
- 1 January (summer semester)

(See https://www.philol.uni-leipzig.de/en/institute-of-linguistics/study/master-linguistics/ for more details.)

Application

University:

- German applicant,
  - degree from Germany
    - Almaweb, 15 September (winter semester)
    - Almaweb, 15 March (summer semester)
  - degree from abroad
    - Uniassist, 1 September (winter semester)
    - Uniassist, 1 March (summer semester)
- foreign applicant,
  - degree from Germany
    - Almaweb, 1 May – 31 May (winter semester)
    - Almaweb, 1 December – 31 December (summer semester)
  - degree from abroad
    - Uniassist, 1 April – 1 May (winter semester)
    - Uniassist, 1 November – 31 December (summer semester)

Theory of grammar:

- Is it possible to provide a unified account of syncretisms (identical forms in morphology with different functions)?
- What is the grammatical difference between accusative-aligning and ergative-aligning languages?
- Are rules of grammar violable?

Selected research questions

Typology:

- How many and which parameters does one need to distinguish all possible languages from one another?
- Which factors determine the distribution of those parameters among the languages of the world?
- What is the explanation for the nature of the existing parameters (and the non-existence of purely hypothetical parameters)?

Selected research questions

Computational/experimental approaches:

- Do speakers of verb-final languages face a greater burden when it comes to processing sentences than speakers of verb-initial lanugages?
- What are the formal properties (e.g., in terms of their expressive power) of different grammar formalisms, and which properties are needed to account for natural language grammars?
- What is the exact relation between a theory of grammar and an actual algorithm needed to parse the sentences generatable by this theory?

Syncretisms

(1) Pronominal Inflection in German

dies-	[sg] [masc]	[neut]	[fem]	[pl]
[nom]	-er	-es	-e	-e
[akk]	-en	-es	-e	-e
[dat]	-em	-em	-er	-en
[gen]	-es	-es	-er	-er

Alignment

(2) Accusative-aligning: German

    a.   Der   Fritz   kennt den   Hans.
        the.nom Fritz.nom knows the.acc Hans.acc
        'Fritz knows Hans.'

    b.   Der   Fritz schläft.
        the.nom Fritz sleeps
        'Fritz sleeps.'

    c.   *Den   Fritz schläft.
        the.acc Fritz sleeps

(3) Ergative-aligning: Archi (Caucasian, Russia)

    a.   Dija-mu   x̄$_\circ$alli-Ø   b-ar-ši   b-i.
        father:I.sg-erg bread:III.sg-abs III.sg-bake-ger III.sg-aux
        'Father bakes the bread.'

    b.   Dija-Ø   w-irx̄$_\circ$in.
        father:I.sg-abs I.sg-work
        'Father works.'