PhD positions at Leipzig University in Natural Language Processing/Computational Linguistics

There are two open PhD positions in Natural Language Processing available at the Institute for Computer Science at Leipzig University, in the group of Leonie Weissweiler.

Preferred starting date: April 1, 2026 (later possible).

Application deadline: January 15, 2026 (after that, the position will remain open until filled)

Positions: Full-time (TV-L E13) for 3 years

Topics

The positions are not bound to a specific project, which will allow us some freedom to find a project that is interesting to everyone involved.

The long-term goal of my research is to use language models of any size to investigate long-standing questions in linguistics about the abstraction levels and mechanisms of language, how they are similar across languages but also different in each one, and how they evolved. Language models can be used as simulations of language learning, and by studying how they learn and then process language, we can gain insights into how language could work, and then compare that to human behavioural data.
In the short term, this will require that we build better evaluations so that we can quantify to which degree a language model has acquired a particular language and compare against other models and languages, especially low-resource languages which are often structurally very different from the high-resource languages for which evaluations are already available. It will also require better interpretability methods so that we can not only quantify how well a phenomenon is learned, but also compare the mechanism used by the language model against different hypotheses of human language learning.

For a better understanding of my research interests, you can also check out my [Google Scholar profile](#) and my [website](#).

PhD students will be able to take advantage of a large international network of collaborators, and we will arrange a research stay abroad for several months for each student at some point during their PhD, with a host appropriate for their research

topics. There are also interesting opportunities for local collaborations, for example with the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.

Scads.AI

PhD students will be affiliated with the Leipzig Center for Scalable Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence ScaDS.AI, a national AI Competence Center funded by the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR) and the Free State of Saxony. This means that students will be integrated into the ScaDS.AI Graduate School which organises a yearly retreat, a biweekly seminar, a public scientific lecture series and offers other support and networking opportunities. Scads.AI also generously provides access to its significant compute resources.

Funding

The positions are fully funded as TVL-13 100% for three years. You can familiarise yourself with the pay scheme here. PhD students will have teaching obligations of two hours per week during the semester, typically in the shape of a tutorial.

Candidates

Ideal PhD candidates have a master's degree in computational linguistics, computer science or a related discipline, a strong interest in natural language processing and language, excellent mathematical and programming skills and are team players. Knowledge of German is a plus, but not required. However, strong written and spoken English skills are essential.

International applicants can find more information on doing a PhD in Germany here (provided by the Federal Government) and specific to Leipzig here.

Leipzig University is strongly committed to diversity and especially welcomes applications from members of underrepresented groups.

Location

Leipzig University is the second-oldest university in Germany. It looks back on over 600 years of tradition and is a comprehensive university with 14 faculties, 465 professorships, around 31,000 students and a variety of subjects in 158 degree programs. Leipzig has a well-connected research landscape: the university is part of a local network that includes Max Planck, Helmholtz, Fraunhofer, and Leibniz institutes, providing opportunities for collaboration across different areas of science.

The Institute for Computer Science is located directly in the city centre, in the Paulinum building. Leipzig offers a high quality of life, a vibrant cultural scene, and excellent transport connections — Berlin is only an hour away.

You can find information about pursuing a PhD at Leipzig University, compiled by the PhD student council, [here](#).

Application

To apply, email your CV, transcripts, a copy or draft of your Master's thesis and a 1-page research proposal to leonie.weissweiler@lingfil.uu.se under the header [LEIPZIG–PHD]. The research proposal should not be in the scope of an entire PhD, but should rather be an idea for a first project that you would be interested in working on, and show that you are able to formulate a research question and make a plan for how to answer it.

Please don't hesitate to email me if you have any other questions.