



# Linguistics

Linguistics investigates all aspects of spoken and written human language. It applies the social sciences, the natural sciences, and the humanities to the study of language. Linguistics includes the study of how languages use sound, the organization of language in word structure, syntax, and semantics, the meaning and analysis of spoken and written texts, and the structural patterns of different language systems, including sign languages, throughout the world and through history.

The study of linguistics enables students to develop the objectivity and analytical and argumentative skills, as well as cross-cultural awareness, that are applicable to numerous occupations. It also serves as a solid foundation for advanced work in graduate or professional school programs.

## SKILLS & ABILITIES

A concentration in linguistics provides students with the opportunity to build skills and abilities in areas ranging from critical analysis to theory development to observation. Applying linguistic theory within a global perspective, students address myths about language in addition to acquiring new knowledge and skills. Whether working

as a librarian, a computer programmer, or a legislative aide, for example, a graduate would find an objective view of language and the ability to synthesize theories useful on a regular basis. Representative skills and abilities acquired by majors in Linguistics are highlighted below.

### Cross-Cultural

- Emphasizing a global perspective
- Relating language to social context
- Identifying relationships between language groups
- Adapting to/functioning in other cultures
- Working with persons from other backgrounds

### Communication

- Listening/reading for meaning and social use
- Applying knowledge about discourse skills
- Understanding historical language change
- Writing clearly
- Informing/explaining ideas
- Presenting information effectively
- Gaining insight into human-computer interaction

### Analysis

- Reading critically
- Identifying patterns
- Analyzing discourse
- Evaluating evidence
- Comparing interpretations

### Research

- Observing people/data
- Applying diverse theories
- Acknowledging historical perspectives
- Working with research subjects
- Applying methodologies from many disciplines

## OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

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A concentration in linguistics has led graduates to successful careers in research, business, and professional fields. Many graduates go on to law school or medical school, where the analytics skills that are sharpened in linguistics courses are especially useful, or to academic graduate programs in fields ranging from psychology to computational linguistics to languages, or masters programs in speech

pathology, information science, business, or language teaching. The range of occupational areas chosen by linguistics majors may be seen in this selected list below, which was developed from follow-up information about University of Michigan graduates and also from national data. Some of the occupations listed below require further study and/or specialized training.

Advocacy (e.g., supporting ethnic minorities or other social groups)  
Cryptography  
Editing/publishing  
Information sciences

International relations (government, business)  
International student support  
Language-related software development

Lexicography  
Research assistant  
Speech pathology  
Speech recognition/speech synthesis

Teaching English as a Second Language  
Technical writing  
Translating/interpreting  
Website design

## CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

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Students concentrating in linguistics take three required courses, one each in the core areas of phonetics/phonology, syntax, and semantics, and an additional 21 credits of courses in linguistics. Consult the *LS&A Bulletin* for more detailed information on program requirements.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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For information about choosing a career, about graduate/professional school, internships, or job descriptions; and for library resources:

The Career Center  
3200 Student Activities Building  
(734) 764-7460  
[www.careercenter.umich.edu](http://www.careercenter.umich.edu)

For information about degree requirements for the linguistics concentration and minor, and for general information about choosing a major:

Student Services Assistant  
Linguistics Department  
440 Lorch Hall  
(734) 764-0353  
E-mail: [Linguistics@umich.edu](mailto:Linguistics@umich.edu)  
[ling.lsa.umich.edu](http://ling.lsa.umich.edu)

LS&A Academic Advising Center  
1255 Angell Hall  
(734) 764-0332