Linguistics, M.A.

Department of Linguistics graduate programs emphasize theory and research. Students interested in non-university careers also may take courses in applied linguistics and other fields as an option in the M.A. program.

Iowa's linguistics department has particular strengths in phonology, syntax, and second language acquisition (SLA).

The phonology curriculum emphasizes current theoretical perspectives, including optimality theory, and the collection, description, and interpretation of novel phonological and phonetic data. Courses feature extensive work in data analysis and problem solving, focusing on construction and evaluation of phonological theories, particularly in light of new empirical data.

The syntax curriculum includes the dual emphases of empirical and theoretical perspectives. It offers a variety of foundational courses that build analytic and argumentation skills, as well as specialized course work on current issues in syntactic theory. The courses consist of intensive work in problem solving. They combine discovery and description of new linguistic data with exploration of the implications of such facts in testing and constructing syntactic theories.

The curriculum in second language acquisition includes courses that provide an overview and analysis of current SLA research conducted within the generative framework, with emphasis on explaining the linguistic competence of second language learners in terms of universal grammar (UG), the innate language acquisition device. Work focuses on experimental research investigating the influence of the first language, theories of UG access, and related topics.

Requirements

The Master of Arts in linguistics requires a minimum of 31-37 s.h. of graduate credit with thesis, or 37 s.h. without thesis. A student's advisor must approve all courses that count toward the degree.

A student with a linguistics background may waive up to 6 s.h. of course work if the department determines that the student completed comparable work before enrolling in the program.

Comprehensive examinations cover phonology, syntax, and applied linguistics (for students who choose this option).

Core Courses

All M.A. students complete the following set of required core courses in phonology, syntax, and language acquisition (total of 22 s.h.).

All of these:
- LING:3005 Articulatory and Acoustic Phonetics 3
- LING:5000 Proseminar: Morphosyntax 1
- LING:5010 Introduction to Syntax 3
- LING:5020 Introduction to Phonology 3
- LING:6010 Syntactic Theory 3
- LING:6020 Phonological Theory 3
- LING:6080 Topics in Second Language Acquisition 3

One of these:
- LING:5040 Linguistic Field Methods 3
- LING:6040 Linguistic Structures 3
- LING:6050 Language Universals Linguistic Typology 3

Electives/Thesis

Thesis students also complete at least 9 s.h. of electives and may earn up to 6 s.h. for the thesis.

Nonthesis students also complete 15 s.h. of Department of Linguistics course work, which may include a 9 s.h. focus (e.g., teaching English as a second language).

Admission

Applicants to the graduate program in linguistics must complete an application form, submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test scores, and have three letters of recommendation sent to the Department of Linguistics. Students whose first language is not English must submit Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores. Applications for admission should be submitted as early as possible for the following academic year.

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College.

Financial Support

Applications should be received by February 1 for the following academic year in order to have priority in consideration for financial aid. Applications received after February 1 are considered for remaining aid. Early submission of an application is strongly encouraged.

Applications for awards are considered only for students whose application for admission is complete.

Career Advancement

A master's degree with TESL emphasis qualifies graduates to teach English as a second language in the United States or overseas. Unique teaching opportunities worth exploring include those with the Peace Corps and Teach For America.

A number of companies, such as Microsoft, Xerox, Apple, Hewlett-Packard, and other high-tech firms, regularly hire employees with linguistics degrees. Opportunities also exist for government work, for example, as a special agent linguist for the FBI.

The Pomerantz Career Center offers multiple resources to help students find internships and jobs.