Linguistics, PhD

The Linguistics program in the Department of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures, and Cultures has particular strengths in multilingual language acquisition, phonology, and syntax. Students are encouraged to take courses in a wide variety of departments and programs across the university.

The phonology curriculum emphasizes current theoretical perspectives, including Optimality Theory, and the collection, description, and interpretation of novel phonological and phonetic data. Students may also study phonological acquisition and development. Courses feature extensive work in data analysis and problem-solving, focusing on the 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 coursework on current issues in syntactic theory. The courses consist of intensive work in problem-solving. They combine the discovery and description of new linguistic data with the exploration of the implications of such facts in testing and constructing syntactic theories.

The acquisition curriculum emphasizes multilingual language syntax and phonological development in simultaneous, sequential, and late learners across a variety of learning contexts. Students have research opportunities that provide an overview and analysis of current language acquisition research.

PhD students may enroll in the Certificate in Cognitive Science of Language program of study offered through the Graduate College. This certificate provides students with multidisciplinary training in cognitive science—a field that complements linguistics in many diverse ways—and the opportunity to work closely with faculty and graduate students from other departments across campus.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- be familiar with the fundamental concepts of phonology, syntax, and an additional specialization area typically focused on an aspect of language acquisition in multilingual populations;
- conduct original research in the field of linguistics by writing two comprehensive exam papers, of publishable quality, to be presented to the department no later than their third year in the program;
- conduct original research that will culminate in a dissertation, defended by an oral exam;
- gain experience with experimental methods and analysis through participation in faculty-run labs and discussion groups across campus that focus on language acquisition and development;
- expand their understanding of how the fundamental concepts of linguistics relate to those of cognate areas determined with their advisor, such as psychology, education, anthropology, and computer science, providing them with a broad perspective on human language;
- take courses in statistical methods and have a clear understanding of how to carry out and interpret statistical analyses at an intermediate to advanced level;
- be encouraged to submit abstracts to conferences (national and international) to disseminate their research and to work toward publishing their comprehensive papers before graduation; and
- be encouraged to participate in cocurricular activities outside of their regular coursework.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy in linguistics requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit. Students must maintain a Graduate College program grade-point average of at least 3.50. The highly selective program provides students with a strong foundation in theoretical linguistics and helps them develop the skills they will need to explore the close relationship between linguistics and related disciplines.

The PhD in linguistics requires the following coursework.

Requirements	Hours
Core Courses	22
Electives	12
Additional Coursework	38
Additional Requirements	

Core Courses

Students complete the following set of required core courses for a total of 22 s.h. Core courses must be taken on an A–F graded basis.

Course #	Title	Hours
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:6040	Linguistic Structures	3
LING:6050	Language Universals Linguistic Typology	3

Linguistics Core Electives

Students take 12 s.h. of linguistics courses (prefix LING) numbered 4000 or above, excluding LING:4010, LING:4050, LING:4900, LING:6900, and LING:7900; these courses must be taken on an A–F graded basis. The core electives may include a maximum of 6 s.h. total from LING:4195 Linguistics Lab II, LING:5090 Special Projects, and LING:7100 Special Projects.

Additional Coursework

Students complete 38 s.h. in additional coursework. This may include additional linguistics courses (prefix LING) numbered 3000 or above. All additional coursework must be approved by a student's advisor.

Students are encouraged to explore courses from other disciplines that align with their individual research focus, including the graduate certificate in the cognitive science of language.

Additional Requirements

Comprehensive Exam

To pass the comprehensive examination for the PhD, a student must gain approval for two papers of publishable quality. One must be in phonology or syntax. The other should be in an area of the student's choosing and must be distinct from the area of the first paper.

Dissertation

An oral defense of the dissertation and three years in residence at the University of Iowa are required. Students enroll in LING:7900 PhD Thesis while working on the dissertation. In addition, all candidates are required to gain supervised experience in teaching and research.

Graduate Education

Graduate education prepares students with advanced knowledge and skills in specialized fields. At the University of Iowa, the Graduate College advocates for student-centered graduate education and supports equitable application of rules and policies across graduate programs.

Academics

University of Iowa graduate credentials are regulated by policies and requirements found in the Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations. This includes minimum grade-point average (GPA) requirements for academic standing and degree conferral. The Graduate College sets the minimum requirement. Individual graduate programs may establish higher GPA requirements.

Admissions

Graduate student applicants must meet admission requirements for both the Graduate College and the program to which they have applied. University of Iowa graduate admission requirements are published by the Graduate College and on the Graduate Admissions website.

Financial Support

Graduate students might be eligible for financial support. Several contingencies apply, including degree program and award type, satisfactory progress toward degree, satisfactory completion of all duties related to an appointment, and availability of funding. Graduate students should inquire directly with their program for more information about funding availability. The Graduate Student Employment Standards govern the employment relationship between the University of Iowa and all graduate teaching and research assistants in all matters except wages, which are covered by an existing collective bargaining agreement or the conditions of an applicable federal grant.

Admission

Applicants to the graduate program in linguistics must submit an online application to the Graduate College. In addition to three letters of recommendation, the application requires a statement of purpose that outlines the student's goals and planned area of research and identifies the faculty member(s) with whom the student would like to work.

Applicants also must provide written evidence of the ability to do advanced work in linguistics. This may include one or more of the following:

- a short squib-style paper (short notes consisting of 5,000 words maximum) that makes a specific point by calling attention to a theoretically unexpected observation about language without the need for a developed analysis or solution;
- a final course paper; and
- a research project outlining the area of investigation the applicant wishes to pursue.

Applications must be received no later than January 15 for admission the following fall.

All applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website.

Career Advancement

Career opportunities in linguistics can be found in academia, government, industry, and the nonprofit sectors.

A number of companies, such as Amazon, 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 Linguistic Society of America has a wealth of resources available to individuals interested in pursuing a career in linguistics.

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

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

Linguistics, PhD

Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
72 s.h. must be graduate level coursework. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. [a, b]		
	Hours	**0**
First Year		
Fall		
LING:6101	Cognitive Science of Language Proseminar I	3
Advanced syntax/phonology course [c]		3
Elective course [d]		3
	Hours	**9**
Spring		
LING:6102	Cognitive Science of Language Proseminar II	3
LING:7100	Special Projects [e, f]	3

Elective course [d]		3
	Hours	**9**
Second Year		
Fall		
Advanced syntax/phonology course [c]		3
Elective course [d]		3
Elective course [d]		3
Present first Comprehensive Exam paper		
	Hours	**9**
Spring		
LING:7100	Special Projects [f, g]	3
Elective course [d]		3
Elective course [d]		3
	Hours	**9**
Third Year		
Fall		
LING:7100	Special Projects [h, i]	3
Elective course [d]		3
Elective course [d]		3
Exam: Doctoral Comprehensive Exam [j, k]		
	Hours	**9**
Spring		
LING:7100	Special Projects [l]	3
Elective course [d]		3
Elective course [d]		3
Present and defend Dissertation Prospectus [m]		
	Hours	**9**
Fourth Year		
Fall		
Elective course [d]		3
Elective course [d]		3
	Hours	**6**
Spring		
Elective course [d]		3
Elective course [d]		3
	Hours	**6**
Fifth Year		
Fall		
LING:7900	PhD Thesis	3
	Hours	**3**
Spring		
LING:7900	PhD Thesis	3
Exam: Doctoral Final Exam [n]		
	Hours	**3**
	Total Hours	**72**

a Beyond the MA degree course requirements, the PhD program in linguistics has few set requirements. Upon acceptance to the program, students work closely with their faculty advisor to determine and select appropriate graduate level coursework that best suits their goals.

b Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.

c Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate coursework and sequence.

d 18 s.h. must be in an approved specialty area; if relevant to research, students may complete coursework in an additional language. Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate elective coursework and sequence.

e Prepare first Comprehensive Exam paper.

f To pass the Comprehensive Exam for the PhD, a student must submit two papers of publishable quality and present each orally as part of the departmental colloquium. One must be in phonology or syntax. The other should be in an area of the student's choosing and must be distinct from the area of the first paper.

g Prepare second Comprehensive Exam paper.

h Begin preparing Dissertation Prospectus in consultation with Dissertation Committee.

i In the semester following the Comprehensive Exam, but no later than the sixth semester of enrollment in the PhD program, the student presents a Dissertation Prospectus to the Dissertation Committee.

j Set-up Dissertation Committee in consultation with faculty advisor.

k Present second Comprehensive Exam paper.

l Prepare Dissertation Prospectus defense.

mMust be approved by Dissertation Committee.

n Oral dissertation defense.