Linguistics, Ph.D.

The Department of Linguistics 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 also may study phonological acquisition and development. 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 coursework 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 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.

Ph.D. students 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.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in linguistics requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit, or 73 s.h. for graduates of the M.A. nonthesis program. Students must maintain a cumulative g.p.a. of at least 3.00. 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 Ph.D. with a major in linguistics requires the following coursework.

Core Courses

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of these (18 s.h.):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>One upper-level syntax course</td>
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<tr>
<td>One upper-level phonology course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two or more courses numbered 5000 or above, as approved by advisor</td>
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Specialty Area Courses

An approved specialty area (18 s.h.) also is required. In addition, students whose work is focused on a particular language are strongly encouraged to take courses in or on that language (e.g., French, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Korean linguistics), in consultation with their advisor.

Additional Requirements

To pass the comprehensive examination for the Ph.D., 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.

An oral defense of the dissertation and three years in residence at the University of Iowa are required. In addition, all candidates are required to gain supervised experience in teaching and research.

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. They must submit a statement of purpose outlining their goals, planned area of research, and state the faculty member(s) with whom the student would like to work.

Applicants 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.

Applicants whose first language is not English must submit official test scores to verify English proficiency. Applicants can verify English proficiency by submitting official test scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

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

Financial Support

Applications should be received by January 15 for the following academic year in order to have priority in consideration for financial aid. Applications received after January 15 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

Linguistics majors have found work teaching English as a second language overseas. Unique teaching opportunities worth exploring include those with the Peace Corps and Teach For America.

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