

Linguistics, PhD

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.

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 towards publishing their comprehensive papers before graduation; and

- be encouraged to participate in cocurricular activities outside of their regular coursework.

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 MA nonthesis program. Students must maintain a cumulative grade-point average 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 PhD with a major in linguistics requires the following coursework.

Core Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these (18 s.h.):		
One syntax course numbered 5000 or above		
One phonology course numbered 5000 or above		
Two or more courses numbered 5000 or above, as approved by advisor		

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 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.

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 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 Jan. 15 for admission the following fall.

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 Jan. 15 for the following academic year in order to have priority in consideration for financial aid. Applications received after Jan. 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.

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.

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Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
72 s.h. must be graduate level coursework (73 s.h. for students entering with a nonthesis MA). 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 ^{e, 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
Present second Comprehensive Exam paper ^j		
Hours		9

Spring

LING:7100	Special Projects ^k	3
	Elective course ^d	3
	Elective course ^d	3
Present and defend Dissertation Prospectus ^l		
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
	Final Exam ^m	
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 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.
 - f Prepare first Comprehensive Exam 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 Prepare Dissertation Prospectus defense.
 - l Must be approved by Dissertation Committee.
 - m Oral dissertation defense.