



Linguistics

Think language, think linguistics

Linguistics does not prescribe grammatical correctness. Instead it describes how people actually communicate and how this changes from one context, situation, culture, geographical domain or even one moment to another.

Do languages fascinate you?

Are you interested in how language works?

Do you wonder how languages originated and whether animal communication is different from human language? Have you thought about why and how languages change? Have you thought about what all languages have in common? What does a person's language have to do with where they live, their age, their gender, their occupations, their cultures, their social groups, and the historical times in which they live? Have you wondered how and why people learn other languages? Are you interested in how one goes about teaching another language? You will find the answers to all of these questions – and more – when you study linguistics.

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What is Linguistics?

Linguistics does not prescribe grammatical correctness. Instead it describes how people actually communicate and how this changes from one context, situation, culture, geographical domain or even one moment to another.

When you study linguistics, you will find the answers to a range of questions.

For example:

How many languages are there in the world? Why and how do languages change, become endangered or die out?

Why do some sentences have more than one meaning? How do new words get into a language?

Why do different people speak differently, why do they sound different and why do they use different forms of language?

How do children acquire language and why do they start to speak? What does it really mean to be bilingual or bi-cultural?

Linguistics studies communication from a range of perspectives

In theoretical linguistics you will study

- phonetics (the study of speech sounds)
- phonology (the study of sound systems)
- morphology (the study of word structures)
- syntax (the study of sentence structures)
- semantics (the study of meaning) and
- pragmatics (the study of language use)

In applied linguistics, which is often interdisciplinary, you will study

- matters involving language and individuals
- language and communities
- language and texts

You will learn about language teaching, language learning, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, reading cognition, cross-cultural communication.

Linguistics at Otago

The linguistics staff members at Otago teach and research a variety of areas, including:

- linguistic typology
- syntax
- language policy
- phonology
- psycholinguistics
- child language acquisition
- second language acquisition
- second language teaching
- reading
- multilingualism
- language attitudes
- sociocultural theory
- Asian and Oceanic languages

Degree options

There are various ways in which you can incorporate linguistics into your degree:

- BA majoring in linguistics
- BA majoring in english and linguistics
- BA majoring in another language and linguistics
- TESOL minor with any other major or any other degree (including all of the above except the major in linguistics which includes most of the TESOL minor course requirements)
- Graduate Diploma in Second Language Teaching
- in other Graduate Diplomas
- as additional papers in other degrees

Careers for Linguistics graduates

There are many career options for linguistics graduates.

The TESOL minor equips you to teach English abroad and at home in language schools and other non-state institutions.

Previous graduates are now lawyers, editors, copy-writers, technical writers, journalists, award winning film directors and producers, translators, interpreters, sign language interpreters, language policy makers, diplomats.

You will find linguistic graduates as first language teachers, second language teachers, primary school teachers, high school teachers, speech therapists, university lecturers, polytechnic lecturers.

Linguistics graduates have gone on to be newspaper reporters, editors, television producers, television reporters, software designers, actors, comedians, education policy makers, machine voice synthesisers, entrepreneurs, publishers, creative writers, science writers, marketers.

Come and see us in the Linguistics Section to see why we use trees in our main image

For more information:

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PROFILE

Blake Turnbull

BA Linguistics and Japanese, Linguistics and Japanese (Combined Honours), MA Linguistics

Blake Turnbull had no idea linguistics existed when he began studying at Otago, but the idea of a whole subject dedicated to language and language studies seemed like an ideal fit with his Japanese major.

"I took all the linguistics papers to try to work out which I preferred, and went down the education path – but that's just one path. Linguistics is such a broad area, whether you go down the education side like I have, or down the psychological, social or theory side."

A double major in Linguistics and Japanese turned out to be the perfect combination for Blake. He was able to use his own experiences as a Japanese language learner to add depth to his studies in linguistics theory. In his practical linguistics classes, where he had to take turns being the teacher, Blake was able to relate to the students and their needs.

"I agree with the idea that language learners make the best language teachers and linguists because they understand what it's like to be in the students' position," he says.

Exchange was a driving factor in Blake's decision to study at Otago – this dream becoming a reality during his third year with a five-month trip to Yokohama, Japan. "It was just long enough to get a feel for what it's like to live there".

Now Blake is heading back to Japan to undertake his PhD in foreign language education at Kyoto University.

Blake's journey has been such an enjoyable one that he is keen for people coming to university to know that linguistics is available as a subject.

"Linguistics really complements a wide range of degrees whether it's psychology, sociology or education – it doesn't have to be related to learning languages. Linguistics will open up new paths to discover."



For questions about
Linguistics
otago.ac.nz/linguistics