

LINGUISTICS, B.A.

Seven Penn State campuses are scheduled for closure after Spring 2027: DuBois, Fayette, New Kensington, Mont Alto, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, and York. New students are not being admitted at these campuses.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: University Park

Career Paths

A linguistics major can help students in a variety of career paths. The critical thinking and language analysis skills gained by our students provide good preparation for careers in information science and technology (especially when combined with computer science courses), education (especially language teaching), speech pathology, or audiology. Linguistics also provides good preparation for legal studies, law enforcement and related careers, as well as fields requiring precise use of language, such as advertising, publishing, or journalism. Students interested in international business or global studies would also benefit from studying linguistics.

Careers

Courses in linguistics provide students the opportunity to practice and hone skills such as analytical reasoning, critical thinking, formulating hypotheses and argumentation, so linguistics students can easily pursue a variety of different career paths. The skills gained by our students provide good preparation for careers in information science and technology, education (especially language teaching), speech pathology, or audiology. Linguistics also provides good preparation for legal studies, law enforcement and related careers, as well as fields requiring precise use of language, such as advertising, publishing, or journalism. Students interested in international business or global studies would also benefit from studying linguistics.

Information Science and Technology

The analytical tools taught in linguistics have many parallels to the tools needed for programming and related IT skills. In addition, there are many job opportunities relating to helping computers understand language or using computers to analyze language.

Language Teaching

Students who study linguistics are uniquely positioned to understand language structures, particularly grammar and pronunciation. These skills transfer very well into the language classroom, whether teaching English as a Foreign Language, or helping English speakers learn another language.

Advertising and Publishing

The ability to understand language at a structural level, particularly regarding meaning, is useful in pursuing careers that require the creative use of language.

Law Enforcement and Intelligence Agencies

Agencies value employees with backgrounds in fields like linguistics that teach crucial analytical skills. Additionally, linguistics students gain skills that can help with learning languages quickly and training others in language learning, which is a crucial skill in a globalized world.

Legal and Forensic Consultation

An understanding of dialects, language variation, and speech analysis are often crucial in making legal arguments, and forensic linguistics is an important aspect of the field.

Speech Pathology/Speech and Hearing Science

Training in linguistics is a key to understanding speech, and thus majoring or minoring in linguistics is a useful complement to study in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

Government Services and NGO Work

Course work in sociolinguistics and language variation are attractive qualifications for public sector jobs, and crucial for development projects around the world.