



Linguistics



Ranked #1

ANU is ranked #1 in Australia and in the top 20 globally for 9 disciplines across humanities, arts and social sciences.

*QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024

Linguistics is the scientific study of human language: how we use languages to communicate, how languages vary and change over time, how meanings are expressed, how children and adults acquire language, and how communication differs across communities. At The Australian National University (ANU) courses in Linguistics can be combined with courses from the University’s unparalleled range of languages.

About Linguistics

There are around 7000 different human languages in the world. One feature of language is its diversity – what we say in a sentence in English can be expressed as a single word in the Australian Indigenous language Murrinhpatha (e.g. ‘he kicked him’ – *nungamrirda*). But languages also have much in common – they often share similar sounds and parts of grammar, especially if they are related (like Italian and Spanish). Linguistics is the study of how languages work.

When you study Linguistics you will not only learn how to systematically analyse language, you will also learn how language is central to being human.

You will learn about how language is inseparable from culture, how different components of language enable communication, and how language can frame how we think and feel.

In linguistics we focus on different aspects of languages. These include sounds (phonetics and phonology), sentence structures (syntax), meaning (semantics), how language shapes and is influenced by society (sociolinguistics), and how language is used in interaction (pragmatics). Other subfields of linguistics integrate different disciplines. For instance, psycholinguistics combines linguistics with psychology to ask how we learn and process language. Applied linguistics is concerned with how we teach or learn second languages, and how language is used in contexts such as education, health care, and the law. Linguistics is for everyone!

Importantly, studying Linguistics at ANU is a unique experience. We have expertise in all subfields, and students get the opportunity to learn about the rich linguistic tapestry of our region and beyond, including the study of Indigenous languages of Australia and the Pacific region. And ANU teaches more languages than any other university in Australia, so there are also exciting opportunities for combining languages and linguistics.

Career opportunities

The study of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics opens the way to employment in fields that require insight into the relationship between language, society and culture, knowledge of how language works and the capacity to analyse language data. This includes areas such as education, health, law, media, policy making, and many more. It provides a complementary skillset for anyone interested in fields such as anthropology, international relations, politics, history, philosophy, psychology, and speech pathology and audiology.

Many graduates also go on to work in language-related areas, such as teaching English or other languages, language testing, language technology, natural language processing, translation, and maintenance and revitalisation of Australian Indigenous languages.

Linguistics at ANU

ANU is ranked among the world's top universities, and has a strong international reputation in humanities, arts and social sciences.¹

Courses taught in linguistics at ANU are both theoretically and practically oriented. You will be exposed to fascinating material from a wide variety of languages, and you will be encouraged to carry out original work on a range of different languages, across many domains. Many courses are research-led, enabling you to explore current challenges in linguistic and interdisciplinary research.

You will learn to use a range of linguistic methods and theories to investigate how language is used in different contexts, and how it varies across people, places, and times. You will also examine beliefs and ideologies about language use and language diversity.

Linguists at ANU have built a lively research environment, including the Institute for Communication in Health Care and the Australian National Dictionary Centre. This provides students with great opportunities for taking part in summer schools, internships, seminars and workshops. Cross-discipline collaboration is encouraged.

Flexible Double Degree

As part of a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Languages, a Linguistics major can be combined with other Arts and Social Science degrees as well as with degrees in Law, Business, Science or Engineering and Computer Science as part of the ANU Flexible Double Degree program. anu.edu.au/study/study-options/flexible-double

¹QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024



Henry

Bachelor of Philosophy (Arts) Majoring in Linguistics

I came to linguistics through a love of languages.

I studied quite a few languages in high school, many of which were very different from one another (Classical Greek and Korean being two of them), and I really came to appreciate the beautiful complexity of language, as well as how this complexity could vary so greatly across languages.

My favourite part about studying linguistics is the diversity of the discipline. Language is a naturally complex thing with lots of different areas of study.

The chance to engage in all sorts of fields, from the hard-science computational side of language all the way to the fluid socially-constructed side of language usage is really something you can come to love in an academic field. With that, and the fact that in reality, almost everyone (linguist or not) is interested in how language works, I get a lot of joy in sharing linguistic concepts with friends and peers as stimulating food for thought.

At the moment I'm thinking of going on to do postgraduate work in linguistics after finishing my undergraduate degree at ANU. There's still so much out there that we don't know about language, and I would be humbled to contribute to this body of knowledge, even just a little.

Further information

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