

What can I do with a degree in Linguistics?

Linguistics.



What is Linguistics?

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. It addresses questions relating to the structure of language, how and why languages differ and change, how humans acquire and process language, the relationship between language and society, and the systems of speech sounds that underlie people's words and utterances.

Language is a part of everything people do, it shapes people's identity, relationships, and way of life. Studying Linguistics can help us understand how children can easily learn to speak both English and Māori, why people develop accents, why the words 'air' and 'ear' do not rhyme for everyone, and why 'sweet as' isn't just 'slang'.

Linguistics is an inherently interdisciplinary field that bridges the sciences, social sciences and humanities. It is therefore an ideal complementary field of study alongside teaching, marketing, law, IT, speech and language therapy, international relations, and more. It is useful in any profession requiring skills in problem solving, data collection and analysis, critical thinking, argumentation, and written and oral expression.

Learn more

It is important to do some research when planning a future career. Speak with, ask questions of, and follow relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies, thought leaders and industry professionals to learn more about:

- Career opportunities, work environments and salary information
- Education and training requirements.

Examples of professional bodies

- The Linguistic Society of New Zealand
www.nzlingsoc.org
- Te Rōpū Kaiwhakamāori ā-waha, ā-tuhi o Aotearoa The New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters
www.nzsti.org
- Te Rōpū Kaiwhakaako Reo Ingarihi Ki Iwi Reo Kē TESOLANZ www.tesolanz.org.nz
- Applied Linguistics in Aotearoa New Zealand
www.alanz.org.nz

Career and study information

Some study pathways and degrees have a recommended school background, and some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional experience.

Gather helpful information from:

- Subject-specific content at
www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/linguistics
- Job profiles on career websites like
www.careers.govt.nz
- Job adverts/vacancy descriptions
- Industry professional bodies.

This resource is part of a set of brochures focused on subject majors; many can also be studied as minors.



What skills can graduates gain?

Through studying a degree in Linguistics, graduates develop a valuable set of skills and competencies that are transferable to a range of careers. These can include:

- Excellent oral and written communication; able to use language creatively
- Acoustic analysis of speech sounds
- Research and data analysis
- Thinking critically and problem solving
- Strong social and political awareness
- Cooperation, teamwork and leadership
- Attention to detail
- Working to deadlines
- Project management
- Good planning and careful execution of work.

What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, client/customer-focus, bicultural competence, cultural awareness, teamwork, and initiative.

With technology, globalisation, and other drivers changing society, skills such as resilience, problem solving, and adaptability is important.

Skills that are likely to grow in importance include analytical and creative thinking, systems thinking, technological literacy, AI and big data.*

*World Economic Forum: www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills

How can these skills be developed?

- Some skills are gained through studying
- Extra-curricular activities can help, such as getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities, whether it is undertaking work experience, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group.

Where have graduates been employed?

Linguistic training is helpful for a wide range of careers such as:

- Public and private sector roles requiring advanced communication skills e.g. marketing, sales, public relations, advertising, publishing, law, journalism, travel, tourism, and international relations
- Education — graduates are found at all levels in teaching and research institutions
- Roles requiring advanced understanding of language e.g. in speech and language therapy, software and computational companies, and interpreting and translation services
- Freelance or self-employment, contracting out services such as tutoring, organisational training or editing.

Graduates have found work in research institutes, academia, government, speech and language departments, secondary schools, online learning companies, teaching English abroad programmes, speech analysis technology innovators, and statistical organisations.

What jobs and activities might graduates do?

Graduates with this degree are employed in a range of jobs — see some examples below.

Note: This list is not exhaustive, and some jobs may require further study, training or experience. It is recommended to start with the section 'How can I gain a sense of career direction?'

Interpreter, translator

- Convert what people say or write from one language to another
- Keep abreast of up-to-date meaning of words
- Research specialist topics, travel with groups and present to different audiences

Tertiary lecturer

- Prepare and give lectures, facilitate workshops and tutorials
- Set and mark assignments and exams
- Conduct research, write reports and publish articles

Linguist, linguistic scientist

- Study multiple and varied languages, including origins and changes
- Help preserve unique or endangered languages
- Contribute to other fields which require linguistic skills such as IT (speech technology) or law (forensic linguistics)

Statistical analyst

- Collect, analyse and interpret data
- Identify and forecast trends and needs
- Present information to assist decision-making

Language officer / consultant

- Describe the sound system, words, sentence structure, and vocabulary of language spoken for organisational purposes
- Lead engagement and information sessions
- Translate and interpret

Policy analyst / advisor

- Identify and investigate issues and opportunities e.g. in society, law or governance
- Interpret and consult on existing policies
- Prepare reports and recommend changes

Research analyst / advisor / assistant

- Organise and conduct research surveys
- Test theories and interpret the results
- Write reports and make recommendations

Secondary school teacher

- Prepare and deliver learning experiences in specialised subjects
- Understand the learning needs of rangatahi, observe progress to personalise support
- Promote the wellbeing of rangatahi

Teacher of English for speakers of other languages

- Assess a student's reading, writing, speaking and listening skills and needs
- Design and prepare learning materials
- Present lessons, including on local knowledge and skills for coping in a new place

Examples of other job titles and careers include:

- Alternative formats technician
- Technical communicator
- Research assistant
- Governance coordinator
- Information officer
- Librarian
- Lexicographer
- Marketing and communications advisor
- Speech and language therapist.

Further study options

Linguistics offers postgraduate programmes at all levels, many of which allow you to carry out your own research. Postgraduate study can also lead to an academic career in teaching and research.

Many Linguistics graduates do additional training in areas such as computer science, teaching, librarianship, TESOL, journalism or management.

Further study may facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability.

It is important to determine which, if any, further study options align with future career aspirations.

For further UC study options visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study

How can I gain a sense of career direction?

Understanding yourself and others is important to gain a sense of direction. This grows with experience; therefore, trying new things and reflecting on an ongoing basis is important.

Career planning checklist

Discover and reflect on:

- Your values, interests, strengths, abilities, and aspirations
- Your connection to whānau, people, and places
- Lifestyle preferences and location
- The skills you want to gain, use, or enhance

Engage in a variety of experiences to learn about:

- How you want to contribute to society, the environment, and global challenges
- The tasks, responsibilities and work environments you prefer
- Your work values, priorities and interests

Learn more and gather career and study information

(refer to page one of this resource)

- Speak with people working in careers that interest you; check the realities of a job/career
- Gather information from various sources

Identify your next steps

- Talking to a career consultant can help you to identify your next steps. Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers



What have other students and graduates done?

Explore career stories of students' university experiences and UC alumni who make a difference globally in varied ways.

Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories



Sidney

Currently studying a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Previous Experience: Data Analyst, Stats NZ
Tauranga Aotearoa

Master of Linguistics
Master of Applied Data Science
Bachelor of Science (Linguistics)

What has shaped your interest in Linguistics?

Language is all around us. I often feel like there's no limit to how we analyse and interpret language as there are so many layers to language and communication. As a child of migrants from Hong Kong in a Cantonese-speaking household in Aotearoa New Zealand, I've always been fascinated by how our worldview is shaped by our language.

What did you do after your BSc degree?

I was offered a thesis scholarship to pursue a Master of Linguistics, which helped to develop my understanding of linguistics research at a deeper level and to think of ways to apply my skills for positive social impact. I carried out research investigating the vocal satisfaction of transmasculine individuals working alongside our takatāpui and Rainbow communities.

Additionally, I developed my professional experience working alongside communities as a data analyst for Tauranga Aotearoa Stats NZ. In this role, I was able to apply my cultural and communication skills with my analytical skills – the skills you need for linguistic research.

Why study a PhD?

Someone from the Department of Linguistics suggested that I should consider applying for the PhD scholarship offered by the Geospatial Research Institute. I always knew I wanted to return to linguistics and language research, so it was a combination of being in the right place and the right time of my career to pursue a PhD. My PhD project involves modelling language variation and change in local populations using geo-referenced social media language data with a special focus on dialect bias in large language models. It's such a timely topic, especially in the time of ChatGPT, and it's fantastic I can combine my skills and interests – linguistics, community, identity, data – in one project.

Why is Linguistics important?

Do it! When studying Linguistics, you develop such a varied and useful skillset such as critical thinking and data analysis. Not only do we learn to appreciate the diversity of our communities through the study of language, we also learn how ideologies and stereotypes around language relate to wider systemic and structural problems in society. Now more than ever, we need people who are grounded in both quantitative and qualitative research - to bridge the gap between people and communities with science and technology. I have seen how my peers have effectively applied linguistic thinking in the work they do in communicating complex ideas.

Career guidance

Career services are available for future and current students, and recent graduates. To learn more, contact:

Te Rōpū Rapuara | Careers
T: +64 3 369 0303
E: careers@canterbury.ac.nz
www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers

Helpful career insights

- Speaking with employers is key to finding opportunities; not all jobs are advertised
- Developing an online presence is useful as employers can search for future employees online
- Learning about recruitment patterns and where to find opportunities is important.

Study advice

Student Advisors at UC help with questions focused on starting, planning and changing studies. To connect with Student Advisors, visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support

Future students – contact:

The Future Students team
T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)
E: futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz

First year students – contact:

Kaitoko | First Year Student Advisors
T: +64 3 369 0409
E: firstyearadvice@canterbury.ac.nz

Continuing students – contact:

Toi Tangata | Arts
T: +64 3 369 3377
E: artsdegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz
www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/arts

