DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

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ABOUT

MISSION STATEMENT

Linguistics is the study of language as a natural phenomenon. It focuses on grammar, the social context of language variation, the physics and perception of speech sounds, the properties of language evolution and the automated processing of speech and language by computers. As language is an exclusively and intrinsically human characteristic, research on the structure, acquisition, and use of language cuts to the heart of human cognition and the social world, linking linguistics to psychology, anthropology, information science, and many other disciplines. Our department aims to educate students and the public on the structure and use of language, and on the significance of invariant characteristics and systematic variation in languages. Our goals include researching these areas and training students to become independent and creative linguists themselves.

The Department, situated in the College of Arts and Sciences, offers degree programs in General Linguistics leading to a BA or PhD, and a Professional MS degree in Computational Linguistics (CLMS). In order to achieve our goals, in all programs students study issues relating to any and all languages. In order to provide a rich learning environment, classes in the Department of Linguistics are usually limited to 30 students, undergraduate students are encouraged to engage in research with faculty and internships, scholarships and research appointments are available to graduate students. We strive to maintain research-led teaching and to include recent technological advances such as online and hybrid courses.

In addition, the Department of Linguistics fosters the study and preservation of Northwest indigenous languages and American Sign Language (ASL) through teaching and research in order to bolster such marginalized languages. In the ASL minor in particular as well as in students' study of other languages, we aim to ensure that they also deepen their understanding of the structure of the languages they are studying as well as the ways they interact with and reflect the communities in which they are spoken. The Department of Linguistics believes that the diversity of perspectives on the phenomenon of human language provided by expertise in and life experience with different linguistic varieties is critical to the advancement of the field and accordingly we are committed to increasing the diversity of both our department and the field at large (see Diversity).

To learn more our department's mission and character, see the pages below:

- Department of Linguistics Strategic Plan (PDF)
- History
- Diversity
- Press Kit

Department of Linguistics· University of Washington · Guggenheim Hall 4th Floor, Box 352425 · Seattle, WA 98195-2425
Telephone: (206) 543-2046 · Email: phoneme@uw.edu

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