The department specializes in the core theoretical areas of syntax, semantics, morphology, phonology, and phonetics as well as in computational linguistics, language acquisition, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics. To support this research there are four research/teaching laboratories in the department: computational linguistics, language processing and acquisition, phonetics, and sociolinguistics.

The interdisciplinary nature of linguistics is reflected in the large number of current collaborations within linguistics and with departments outside of linguistics. These include several interdisciplinary research grants, the greatest number of which are with Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Bioinformatics, and Speech and Hearing Sciences.