Some degrees are more specialised, for example:

- Applied linguistics, exploring language-related problems such as helping non-standard dialect speakers cope in mainstream schools
- Computational Linguistics, which focuses on how to make machines including computers and mobile phones understand language.

Most students cover similar topics during their first year of university to build a foundation. These may include:

- An introduction to phonology and phonetics, concerned with speech sounds and structures
- An introduction to syntax, which is the study of how sentences are constructed
- Sociolinguistics, which focuses on how society impacts language use.

Why study linguistics?
Linguistics is a very broad subject which gives you access to a wide range of careers - from translation to international commerce. Language is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and influencing our everyday lives, and by understanding a person’s language we can learn essential details about them and their culture.

What will I study at university?
More than 600 departments across the UK offer a linguistics degree. Some of these are single honours degrees, while others combine linguistics with another subject such as:

- Modern languages
- History
- Philosophy
- Music
- Law
- Religious studies

“The job of the linguist, like that of the biologist or the botanist, is not to tell us how nature should behave…but to describe those creations in all their messy glory and try to figure out what they can teach us about...the workings of the human mind.”
Arika Okrent, American linguist
After my degree... what next?

After you graduate you have several choices. Linguistics graduates are employed in a range of jobs in all sorts of organisations, such as:

- Government agencies
- Charities and not-for-profit organisations
- Communications/publishing
- Advertising and public relations
- Import/export
- The military
- Management and consulting

A 2010 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) survey showed that just over half of all linguistics graduates were in paid employment in the UK or overseas six months after graduation.

Many linguistics graduates work in education, for example as learning support assistants, or in the voluntary sector providing English language teaching. They also work in the private sector – companies such as Google employ linguists to develop speech recognition software.

Some universities also offer postgraduate teaching and research, and you may wish to specialise in a particular branch of linguistics. You could, for example, want to work in the health sector as a speech and language therapist - The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists offers a two year diploma/MSc to train for this profession.

What skills will I gain?

Linguistics is a very broad and transferable degree. By the end of your course, you will have developed a number of specific skills such as:

- Fluency in speech and writing
- An understanding of the dynamics of communication
- Problem solving skills
- How to manage an argument

Linguistics in theory

The issue of how children acquire language is fiercely debated. Are we biologically programmed or does upbringing play a role? The **Interactionist** theory argues that language development is both biological and social. It suggests that language learning is influenced by the desire of children to communicate with others.

What do students say?

“I learned so much more from my degree than I imagined. I developed transferable skills which made me a strong candidate in the highly competitive global job market.”

**English Language and Linguistics Student**
Further resources

- **LLAS Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies** is based at the University of Southampton. LLAS specialises in educational projects and professional development in the area of languages and related studies. The LLAS website provides a range of online resources for teachers and students.
  www.llas.ac.uk

- **The Centre for Applied Linguistics** is based at the University of Warwick and prepares students to teach the English language. Its research work focuses on the relationships between applied linguistics and professional practice.
  www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/

- **University Council of General and Applied Linguistics (UCGAL)** provides a unified voice on public policy matters for linguistics within higher education. UCGAL links together major learned societies and associations in the field with aims including to promote research, teaching and learning.
  www.linguistics.ac.uk

- **Linguistics Association of Great Britain (LAGB)** is the professional association for academic linguists from all branches of the discipline. LAGB represents linguistics and linguists in issues such as research funding and quality assessment, and bridges the gap between academic linguistics and language education. The LAGB publishes the *Journal of Linguistics* and holds an annual conference.
  www.lagb.org.uk

- **The Chartered Institute of Linguists** represents professional linguists throughout the world and has more than 6,000 members from all areas of professional and academic life. The Institute delivers Ofqual-accredited qualifications and is involved in language issues at national and international levels. It publishes the journal *The Linguist*.
  www.iol.org.uk

- **The Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas** promotes the study of the history of all branches of linguistic thinking. Its fields of interest include specialised topics such as writing systems, literacy, rhetoric, and the application of linguistic ideas within professional and technical fields.
  www.henrysweet.org

- **The Philological Society (PhilSoc)** is a charity focused on the study of language and languages. PhilSoc funds research and residential courses for sixth-formers as well as publishing its own journal *Transactions of the Philological Society*.
  www.philsoc.org.uk

- **The Linguist List** website has a publications section providing useful details of journals, books and academic papers. It also advertises internships and job vacancies. The site is free and is operated by the Institute for Language Information and Technology (ILIT) at Eastern Michigan University in the USA.
  www.linguistlist.org

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