

# ◆ General Linguistics

## Student guide

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### ◆ What is linguistics?

Linguistics is the **study of human language**: its grammatical and cognitive structure, its social and communicative functions, its acquisition by children and second language learners, its historical development, and much more.

Unlike other linguistic disciplines, General Linguistics ('Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft') concerns itself with the phenomenon of **language in general**, rather than with the study of any single language. The world is home to many more languages than most people realize; current estimates put the number of languages at about 7 000, most of which are heavily endangered and at risk of disappearing by the end of the century. Part of the research work at the Department of General Linguistics at the University of Bamberg is hence dedicated to the study and documentation of small, underrepresented languages.

As a student of linguistics, you will learn how to scientifically **analyze language and linguistic structures** from diverse angles. Some of the areas of study you will become familiar with are how speech is produced and perceived (phonetics); how speech sounds are organized in the system of a language (phonology); how words are constructed (morphology) and combined into phrases and sentences (syntax); how sentences are strung together into coherent texts (discourse structure); how meaning is encoded in language (semantics); what languages across the world have in common and in which respects they differ from one another (typology); how these differences and commonalities have come to be (language history); and how language use is affected by various social dimensions (sociolinguistics).

Linguistics is a **descriptive science**: Linguists work to identify natural patterns of usage by observing the way people actually speak, rather than prescribe how to speak or write "correctly". In fact, one way – though not the only way – of doing linguistics is with the aid of statistical models and machine learning algorithms, usually on the basis of large collections of text data (language corpora). What you will not learn in linguistics are topics such as translating or interpreting language ('Dolmetschen') or analyzing literature.

## ◆ The BA programme

The General Linguistics programme is organized by the **Department of General Linguistics** ('Lehrstuhl für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft'). You can find our information on the department, the lecturers, and the curriculum on our webpage:

[www.uni-bamberg.de/aspra/](http://www.uni-bamberg.de/aspra/)

General Linguistics is a **minor subject** ('Nebenfach') in a Bachelor programme, and can be studied either in an extended (45 ECTS) or minimal form (30 ECTS). It can be combined with all other subjects offered by the University of Bamberg. The anticipated course duration is six semesters. As you might have guessed from this guide, the **language of instruction** in courses in General Linguistics is English, the international lingua franca of science and scholarship.

A degree in General Linguistics can be an essential part of various **career paths**, depending on the major it is combined with. Outside of academic research, knowledge of linguistics is useful in areas such as language teaching, the production of teaching materials and dictionaries, adult education, translation and interpreting, language technology and software development for machine translations, automatic speech recognition, and many more.

## ◆ Language courses

Since a linguist needs to be familiar with a variety of languages in order to be able to talk about them, a significant part of the General Linguistics programme is dedicated to **language learning**. You can freely choose from (almost) all language courses at the University of Bamberg according to your own personal interests. The list of language courses on offer is quite extensive; here is a small sample:

*Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Catalanian, Mandarin Chinese, Croatian, Czech, French, Ancient Greek, Modern Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Kurdish, Latin, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian, and more!*

You can combine any number of language courses from any number of languages, and either focus on deepening your skills in one or two languages, or diversify and learn about a variety of different languages.