

# OFFERING A HIGH SCHOOL LINGUISTICS COURSE

## Why Linguistics?

Linguistics is an exciting, contemporary field of study, combining elements of **natural science, social science, and humanities**. The scope of linguistics ranges from the **anatomy and physiology of the brain** to the **functional role of language in society**.

Language has been studied since ancient times. Linguistics today is a rapidly advancing field contributing to the creation of **intelligent machine agents**, to **clinical studies of language & speech disorders**, even to the **creation of fictional languages** seen in television and film! Core questions include how sounds, words, sentences, and meaning pattern in the mind and are processed by the brain, and how language functions in human social organization and interaction.

Linguistics is highly relevant for both theoretical and practical reasons in our modern technological, multicultural society.



## Why Teach Linguistics in High School?

Linguistics has many attractions as a high school academic program, offering:

- An effective medium for understanding the central processes of science (STEM)
- Critical tools and foundational knowledge for language study
- Analytical and social tools for navigating a multicultural, multilingual world
- A window into social interaction and social relations in society
- A pathway into many career choices in industry and academics
- Opportunities for high school-university collaboration and university credit

## What is the Course Content?

High school linguistics courses align with introductory linguistics courses in college, which focus on:

- Understanding the grammatical and sound (or sign) components of natural language
- Ability to think critically about language structure and use, and to apply inquiry-based tools in their analysis
- Awareness of languages as dynamic systems that vary over time and space
- Awareness of social attitudes about language (accent discrimination, linguistic stereotyping and profiling, etc.) and tools to challenge linguistic injustice.

Students examine sound patterns (phonetics & phonology), word structure (morphology), sentence structure (syntax), word and sentence meaning (semantics & pragmatics) as well as how languages are acquired, change over time, and vary based on region, ethnicity, gender, age, and other social factors.

## Who Can Teach Linguistics?

Teachers in a variety of fields (English, foreign languages, education, etc.) often have taken an introductory course that can be supplemented with textbooks with teacher guides, workshops, and university collaborators who can serve as support for introducing and developing such a course. The Linguistic Society of America offers consultants at local universities around the county who can assist in developing a course in linguistics.

## What are the Results of Studying Linguistics?

Experiments aimed at introducing linguistics into the high school curriculum have been tested and validated. Programs have been introduced in science, social studies, language study (foreign languages and English), and other fields. Both students and teachers in these courses testify to the substantive increase in content knowledge as well as change in attitudes about language.

**Gianna D.:** "I believe studying Linguistics is important because unlike the traditional subjects of math or history, it is something completely foreign that most of us lack any knowledge of. It introduces us to a whole new perception of language itself and gives us an appreciation of the complexity that language is."

**Valentin G.:** "Linguistics has made me more interested in learning new languages and has also made it easier than before. Language is so important because it's like a key to the world. Everybody should know about linguistics, and I for myself, cannot get enough of it."

**Brad R.:** "It was very interesting to learn how society and culture affect language and how people communicate. Depending on your social class or role, your dialect will be different from someone else. It's also affected by your race or background as well; all people in every part of the world have different dialects and idiolects even if they speak the same language."

Learning about linguistics expands students' knowledge and opens their understanding to concepts and ideas they are not typically exposed to in other classes—a perspective that provides new kinds of critical knowledge that applies to everyday life in a wide variety of ways.

## CONTACT US

For more information about High School Linguistics, contact:

Brian Joseph ([joseph.1@osu.edu](mailto:joseph.1@osu.edu)), Ohio State University, President of the Linguistic Society of America

Kristin Denham ([kristin.denham@wwu.edu](mailto:kristin.denham@wwu.edu)), Western Washington University

Richard Larson ([richard.larson@stonybrook.edu](mailto:richard.larson@stonybrook.edu)), Stony Brook University

Anne Lobeck ([anne.lobeck@wwu.edu](mailto:anne.lobeck@wwu.edu)), Western Washington University

Suzi Loosen ([loosensa@gmail.com](mailto:loosensa@gmail.com)), Milwaukee Public Schools