

# What can I do with a degree in Linguistics?

# Linguistics.



## Career planning: what do I need to know?

Knowledge of yourself is important for career decision making. Start by looking at your personal goals, abilities, values and interests to explore study and career options that are relevant to you. Some of these may change over time, so it is important to self-reflect and evaluate your career on an ongoing basis.

### What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, customer-focus, cultural awareness and teamwork. With technology and globalisation changing the nature of society, skills such as resilience, problem solving and adaptability are valuable at work as well as in life.

### How can I develop these skills?

- Some skills are developed through your degree
- Extra-curricular activities can help, for example

getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering

- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities. Whether it is undertaking an internship, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group — these activities will enhance your employability.

### What else should I know?

The career options in this brochure are examples only and the list is not exhaustive. Some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional work experience. Some pathways and degrees have a recommended school background. Find more subject details at [www.canterbury.ac.nz/subjects/linguistics](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/subjects/linguistics)

If this brochure does not answer your questions, talking to an expert such as a career consultant can help you to identify the next steps in your career decision making journey.

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers)

## What is Linguistics?

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. It addresses questions relating to the structure of language, how and why languages differ and change, how humans acquire and process language, the relationship between language and society, and the systems of speech sounds that underlie the words and utterances that we speak and hear.

For example, studying Linguistics can help us to understand how children can easily learn to speak both English and Māori, why New Zealanders sound different from Australians, why the words 'air' and 'ear' rhyme for some people but not for others, and why 'sweet as' isn't just 'slang'.

Given the unique nature of language, Linguistics is an inherently interdisciplinary field that bridges the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities. It is therefore an ideal complementary field of study.



## AT A GLANCE

1500

is the number of te reo Māori words that non-Māori speaking adults have implicit memories of\*

7099

known living languages in the world†

5

most common languages spoken in Aotearoa New Zealand are English, te reo Māori, Samoan, Northern Chinese and Hindi\*\*

## What skills have UC graduates gained?

Through their Linguistics degree, graduates develop a valuable set of skills that are transferable to a range of careers. These skills include:

- Thinking critically, creatively and challenging ideas
- Excellent oral and written communication skills and the ability to use language creatively
- Strong social and political awareness
- Cooperation, teamwork and leadership
- Attention to detail
- Working to deadlines
- Project management and research skills
- Good planning and careful execution of work.

Opportunities to apply your learning outside the classroom are available in this major. Undertaking an internship, for example, can deepen your skillset, awareness of others, working knowledge, and employability.

## Where have UC graduates been employed?

Linguistic training is helpful for a wide range of careers such as:

- Public and private sector roles requiring advanced communication skills eg, marketing, sales, public relations, advertising, publishing, law, journalism, travel, tourism, and international relations
- Education — graduates are found at all levels in teaching and research institutions
- Roles requiring advanced understanding of language eg, in speech and language therapy, in software and computational companies, and in interpreting and translation services
- Freelance or self-employment, contracting out services such as tutoring, organisational training or editing.

UC graduates have found work in research institutes, academia, government, speech and language departments, secondary schools, online learning companies, teaching English abroad programmes, speech analysis technology innovators, and statistical organisations.

\* [www.canterbury.ac.nz/news/2020/kiwi-adults-know-more-te-reo-than-they-realise-uc-study-reveals-.html](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/news/2020/kiwi-adults-know-more-te-reo-than-they-realise-uc-study-reveals-.html)

† *Ethnologue: Languages of the World 2017* [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)

\*\* [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)

## What jobs and activities do graduates do?

Graduates with this degree are employed in a range of jobs — see some examples below.

*Note: Some of the jobs listed may require postgraduate study. See the 'Further study' section.*

### Linguist, linguistic scientist

- Studies multiple and varied languages, including origins and changes
- Helps preserve unique or endangered languages
- Interfaces with other fields which require linguistic skills such as IT (speech technology) or law (forensic linguistics)

### Statistical analyst

- Collects, analyses and interprets data
- Identifies and forecasts trends and needs
- Presents information to assist decision-making

### Language officer / consultant

- Describes the sound system, words, sentence structure, and vocabulary of language spoken for organisational purposes
- Leads engagement and information sessions
- Translates and interprets

### Policy analyst / advisor

- Identifies and investigates issues and opportunities eg, in society, law or governance
- Interprets and consults on existing policies
- Prepares reports and recommends changes

### Research analyst / advisor / assistant

- Organises and conducts research surveys
- Tests theories and interprets the results
- Writes reports and makes recommendations

### Secondary school teacher

- Plans and delivers instructional lessons
- Evaluates performance and provides feedback
- Sets and marks assignments and tests

### Teacher of English for speakers of other languages

- Assesses a student's reading, writing, speaking and listening skills and needs
- Designs and prepares learning materials
- Presents lessons, including on local knowledge and skills for coping in a new place

### Interpreter, translator

- Converts what people say or write from one language to another
- Keeps abreast of up-to-date meaning of words
- Researches specialist topics, travels with groups and presents to different audiences

### Tertiary lecturer

- Prepares and gives lectures, workshops and tutorials
- Sets and marks assignments and exams
- Conducts research, writes reports and publishes articles

### Entrepreneur & self-employment

Entrepreneurship and innovation are an increasing part of the working landscape. Through generating a business idea, or getting involved in a start-up/business venture, you have the potential to create a work opportunity that aligns with your knowledge, skills, values and risk profile. To get started on how to establish, run and grow a new business, go to Te Pokapū Rakahinonga, Centre for Entrepreneurship at the University of Canterbury [www.canterbury.ac.nz/uce](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/uce)

## What professional organisations can I engage with?

Connecting with professional bodies and organisations can help you to establish professional networks and learn more about different career options in your area of interest. Gaining valuable insight into a profession can assist in making informed career decisions.



- The Linguistic Society of New Zealand [www.nzlingsoc.org](http://www.nzlingsoc.org)
- Te Rōpū Kaiwhakamāori ā-waha, ā-tuhi o Aotearoa The New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters [www.nzsti.org](http://www.nzsti.org)
- Te Rōpū Kaiwhakaako Reo Ingarahi Ki Iwi Reo Kē TESOLANZ [www.tesolanz.org.nz](http://www.tesolanz.org.nz)

Having a professional presence on social media networks such as [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) and Facebook can help you to keep up to date with important industry developments and trends, networking opportunities, events and job vacancies. Following relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies and thought leaders is a great way to gain a deeper awareness of the industries that interest you. Social media presents an opportunity to build and enhance networks as well as to display your involvement in projects and any academic successes.

## Why do further study and what are my options?

Postgraduate study can facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability. It is important to determine which, if any, further study will help you in your future career.

Linguistics offers postgraduate programmes at all levels, many of which allow you to carry out your own research. Postgraduate study can also lead to an academic career in teaching and research.

Many Linguistics graduates do additional training in areas such as computer science, teaching, librarianship, TESOL, journalism or management. For UC qualification listings visit [www.canterbury.ac.nz/courses](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/courses)

## Useful links

Te Rōpū Rapuara UC Careers [www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers)

Careers New Zealand [www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)

NZ Institute of Language, Brain and Behaviour [www.nzilbb.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.nzilbb.canterbury.ac.nz)

Ethnologue: Languages of the World [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)

## Simon



*Ngāi Tahu*  
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and  
Mathematics with a minor in French  
Bachelor of Arts with Honours In Linguistics  
and Mathematics  
PhD student at Stanford University

### What motivated you to try Linguistics?

I enjoyed studying both English and French throughout high school. I had never even heard of Linguistics before, but it sounded interesting, so I went to an open day talk given by the Head of Linguistics at UC at the time. From the moment the talk started I was hooked!

### Why the combination with Maths?

It allows for unique perspectives and advances – Mathematics is the language of science and Linguistics is the science of language. These two fields interact in many ways, for instance mathematical theory underpins a large school of thought in linguistics, and both mathematical and linguistic knowledge are required for speech recognition and synthesis systems.

### Can you tell us about your experience as a published author?

When I was working as a Scholarship Calculus tutor no teaching resources existed for that level at the time. So I developed, collated and self-published original resources for classroom use. The books were ordered by nearly 70 schools nationwide and received positive reviews.

### How have your experiences helped you prepare for the future?

I had the opportunity to attend conferences nationally and internationally, work with

influential international researchers, and really get an idea of what it's like to do research for a living.

I worked with researchers while I was a research assistant for the New Zealand Institute of Language, Brain and Behaviour. This involved running experiments and interviews, searching and extracting recorded speech data, reading published studies and writing computer code.

### What would you say to someone considering studies in Linguistics?

Do it! Linguistics is an interesting, rewarding subject which provides skills and knowledge that is useful in a wide range of areas and can both complement and be complemented by other studies. Though it might seem hard at times, the fact that it is based on the logical interpretation of structured patterns means that perseverance will always see you find an answer.

### Read more online

Read more stories about our students' university experiences online. UC alumni make a difference in varied ways around the globe. To find out where graduates are now visit [www.canterbury.ac.nz/getstarted/whyuc/student-profiles](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/getstarted/whyuc/student-profiles)

*The information in this brochure was correct at the time of print but is subject to change.*

## More information

### UC students seeking study advice.

Department of Linguistics and English Language

The Department bridges the social sciences, humanities and natural sciences. It has close ties with the New Zealand Institute of Language, Brain and Behaviour and is a thriving international research hub. We offer qualifications at all levels and are happy to field enquiries from students.

T: +64 3 369 3377

E: [artsdegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:artsdegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/arts/linguistics](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/arts/linguistics)

### Anyone seeking careers advice.

Te Rōpū Rapuara | UC Careers

UC offers intending and current students and recent graduates a wide range of services, including individual career guidance, seminars, career resources and student and graduate employment opportunities.

T: +64 3 369 0303

E: [careers@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:careers@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers)

### Prospective students seeking study advice.

Te Rōpū Takawaenga | Student Liaison

The liaison team provide advice to future students who are starting their degree for the first time. They can assist with information on degrees, scholarships, accommodation, and other aspects of university life. We have offices in Christchurch, Auckland and Wellington.

Ōtautahi | Christchurch

T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)

E: [liaison@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:liaison@canterbury.ac.nz)

Tāmaki Makaurau | Auckland

T: 0800 UCAUCK

E: [auckland@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:auckland@canterbury.ac.nz)

Te Whanganui-a-Tara | Wellington

T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)

E: [wellington@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:wellington@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/liaison](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/liaison)

