



Universiteit Utrecht



PRESTIGE
MASTER

MASTER'S PROGRAMME UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

Linguistics: the Study of the Language Faculty

Graduate School of Humanities

Realise your master plan

Welcome to Linguistics

2

This Utrecht University Prestige Master's programme is intended for students with a linguistically oriented BA degree, who have talent and are curious about language. The programme's focus is man's cognitive capacity for language, in other words, the way language is shaped in and by our brain. The programme offers courses in a wide variety of perspectives to study the language faculty: acquisition (first and second), discourse studies, phonetics, phonology/morphology, psycholinguistics, semantics/computational linguistics, and syntax. From these tracks, the student chooses a major and a minor.

The two-year MA Linguistics programme includes courses in a very wide range of linguistic subdisciplines. Taking the study of the cognitive faculties underlying the structure and use of human language as central, we focus on the following (partly subsequent) questions: What constitutes knowledge of language? How is it acquired? How is it put to use?

The programme covers first and second language acquisition and experimental psycholinguistics, phonetics, computational linguistics, discourse studies and language variation, all studied with a focus on language and language structure (syntax, phonology, semantics). The programme is the right choice for you if you are curious about the way language is structured and about the way it functions, and if you want to put this curiosity into action by learning about how the human language faculty influences these domains.

Why Linguistics?

Linguistics tries to put to the test generally accepted views on langu-



age and come up with new questions and new answers, sometimes showing that generally accepted views are wrong. They are guided by such issues as:

- Is there any point in teaching dyslexic children to read at an earlier age? If so, how do we know which children will turn out to be dyslexic?
- Language is one of the prime properties distinguishing humans from other species. What is so special about language? How did language emerge? How is the structure of language reflected in the structure of our brains and vice versa? How do the various components of language interact?
- Dialect variation is generally assumed to be quite limited,

University and city

Utrecht University's Faculty of Humanities is the largest of its kind in the Netherlands. It includes philosophy, theology, language departments in Dutch, English, German, Romance languages, Celtic languages, near Eastern languages, and departments in history, musicology, history of art, literature, and of course linguistics. The faculty buildings are located in the historic city centre and at the modern university campus De Uithof. All buildings and facilities for Linguistics students, including the library, are situated in the inner city, at walking distance from each other and from the railway station.

Utrecht city has a rich history that can be traced back to Roman times. Its name is derived from the Latin for 'last crossing', referring to Utrecht's Roman border town status as a Rhine crossing. Relative to its size (approximately 300,000 residents), it has the largest historical (16th- and 17th-century) city centre of any Dutch city. The city occupies a central position in the country and the national railway system.

Research environment

The Utrecht Institute of Linguistics OTS (UiL OTS) is an internationally renowned linguistic research institute. The high research and teaching standards can partly be attributed to the extremely active international cooperation policy pursued by UiL OTS, as well as by individual researchers and research groups. Our teaching staff, as well as the body of research fellows and PhD students, is highly international. Foreign students from such countries as Cameroon, China, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Italy, Russia, Serbia and Slovenia comprise just under half our total student body. UiL OTS members present at international conferences and summer schools. They also participate in cooperation with researchers from linguistics/communication/cognitive science departments of many universities (Berlin, Budapest, Delhi, Edinburgh, Geneva, Hyderabad, Leipzig, London, MIT, Moscow, Paris, St. Petersburg, Rutgers, UCLA, UCSC, Verona/Trieste, and many others). Research MA and PhD students at UiL OTS are enrolled in the Graduate School of Humanities, which was established in 2006.

perhaps only to lexicon and pronunciation. We are in the process of finding that the syntactic variation found in Dutch dialects is substantial and might have substantial consequences for language acquisition of standard language, as well as the 'bilingual' status of dialect speakers.

- While language is not only used for communication, it is one of its primary applications. Although communication is possible without language (gestures, signs, pictures, etc.), it can be argued that language certainly facilitates communication, and is arguably a necessity for the communication of complex content. Some complex messages, however, are easier to understand than others. We try to determine why people have a difficult time understanding some, but not all discourse by relating discourse structure and discourse processing. The general way of thinking about communication developed in linguistics is key to appreciating the role communication plays in many circumstances we can think of.
- Bilingualism (or multilingualism) is rapidly becoming a pervasive factor in language communities. What does that mean for education, the problems of aging, etc.?

Experimental linguists addressing such questions need to work on the basis of theories and models of the language faculty that are developed by others working in the fields of syntax, phonology and morphology, as well as semantics and computational linguistics. The theories may be about how language functions in the brain, what model of utterances we should base experiments on, how sensory functions interact with the language-oriented bit of the brain, what kind of computer modelling of speech production achieves the mimicry of

natural language, how the meaning of utterances influences the way they are processed by the brain, how the meaning of utterances itself is influenced by utterances preceding them or the real world environment in which they are pronounced, etc. The list is endless, which means there will always be something for you to discover!

Why in Utrecht?

The MA Linguistics is a Research Master's programme, which means it offers a two-year programme designed to optimally prepare you for a career in research (PhD) or research related jobs in government and industry. (Note that most Master's programmes in the humanities in this country are one-year programmes!)

At nearly every stage of the curriculum, you are encouraged to participate in ongoing research projects at the Institute as part of advanced courses, your internship and of course preparing and writing the Master's thesis. Apart from teaching you about the content of the project and linguistics in general, this also provides you with a unique opportunity to participate in the work of other researchers. Such an experience can really stimulate you to try to challenge your own limits and serve as an inspiration throughout your career.

MA Linguistics students have their own common room to gather and study, located in the main building of the research institute. They have access to the research institute's top quality laboratory facilities – the vault of the bank that used to occupy the building now serves as the sound lab! – and, of course, to the excellent library and computer facilities available to all students of the Faculty of Humanities.

Ted Sanders, full professor of Discourse studies and Language use



"This programme provides students with a wonderful opportunity to qualify for a research career," says Ted Sanders, full professor of Discourse studies and Language use. "Our students determine their own study path, focusing on their

"This programme produces truly excellent PhD candidates"

favourite topic and creating exciting track combination. I've seen students write really well-substantiated research proposals for their term papers. They then go on to complete the empirical part during their second year as part of a cross-linguistic corpus study or a processing experiment. This sometimes even results in a thesis in the form of a journal publication."

"I know from my own experience that nothing is more motivating than getting a taste of actual research practice, as our

students can during the internship. That was what really got me involved."

"This programme produces truly excellent PhD candidates. You can tell they have been trained to present their work in the context of current linguistic issues. It is not a coincidence that my latest PhD student was accepted straight from the Utrecht MA Linguistics programme. She now works on causality in discourse and cognition."

The programme

Becoming a student of the Utrecht University Linguistics programme means satisfying your curiosity about a very specific aspect of language, taken in a broad sense.

You may be interested in, for example, the kind of mistakes second language learners make or the ways in which dialects differ from standard language. You may also address such questions as: What are the properties all languages share? What are the limits to their variation? What kind of evolutionary event could have given rise to language? Which linguistic means make texts more coherent? What is the interplay between world knowledge and knowledge of language in the way we process language? How can the medium (e.g. written, oral, hypertext) influence the linguistic means with which we communicate? Potential areas of interests include the way children learn to put the right stress on words with the amazing speed that they do, the physical properties of speech sound, whether we can make multilingual search engines, etc. These questions belong to the research area covered by courses in the MA Linguistics curriculum. It follows from this wide variety of research questions that there is also a broad range of research methods used to study them. Our linguists have at their disposal a psycholinguistics/ phonetics lab (including recording studios and soundproof listening booths), an acquisition lab (baby lab), an eye-tracking lab, Unix technical support, etc. We conduct experiments, develop abstract theories, make video registrations of speech behaviour, develop computer programmes, etc. Many of these methods are also taught as part of this programme.

Some of these research questions can be studied within a narrowly defined field, others require expertise from a wider array of linguistic

or related domains. For this reason, it makes sense to choose subjects from different sub-areas of linguistics. For example, if your major track is Language Acquisition, you will also take courses in phonology or syntax in order to become an all-round acquisition researcher. It might even be useful to choose subjects outside the domain of linguistics proper. For example, as a future specialist in the field of language, logic and computer science, you will take a course in logic.

Your study path

You start the programme by taking the compulsory courses during the first semester which cover all programme tracks. The tracks are:

- Acquisition (1st, 2nd, bilingualism)
- Discourse studies
- Phonetics
- Phonology and Morphology
- Psycholinguistics
- Semantics and Computational Linguistics
- Syntax

You choose one track as your major. Throughout the first and second years, you complete a total of three 7.5 ECTS courses in your major, as well as the matching Research Methods course (there are two such courses, each shared by several tracks).

During the first year, you also complete a course from a different track (your minor). Throughout the second semester, you complete the research seminar course, concluding with a paper, which aims to introduce students to the unifying principles of the linguistics taught

Numbers refer to ECTS credits

Year 1 (60)			
Semester 1		Semester 2	
Foundations of Linguistics (5)	Language Acquisition and Linguistic Theory* (5)	Major (7.5)	Minor (7.5)
Foundations of Phonology (5)	Neurocognition of Language (5)	Major (5)	Term paper (5)
Foundations of Syntax (5)	Foundations of Semantics (5)	Research Seminar* (2.5)	Research Seminar* (2.5)
Year 2 (60)			
Semester 1		Semester 2	
Minor (7.5)	Research Internship (15)	Master's Thesis (30)	
Methods*/Typology* (7.5)			

*course descriptions on the next page

Full course descriptions and examples of actual schedules can be found online (see last page).

across the different tracks. You conclude your first year with a term paper, which prepares the ground for a more specialised topic that you can then concentrate on in your second year.

In addition to an additional course in your major and your methods course, you complete an internship during your second year. The internship can focus either on fundamental, experimental or applied research. During the first part of the second year, you choose a topic and write a research plan for your Master's thesis, which you will spend the second semester writing.

Courses usually require twice-weekly attendance in addition to reading and completing assignments. The programme items without class attendance (term paper, MA thesis and also internship) involve close collaboration with an individual supervisor. Throughout the two years, you earn ECTS points for courses, papers and the internship. For a passing mark – a requirement for receiving any credits – for compulsory introductions, research seminars, most minor courses and the term paper you receive 5 ECTS, and 7.5 ECTS for a major course. The internship totals 15 ECTS and the Master's thesis 30 ECTS. The programme total is 120 ECTS, which is the requirement for receiving the MA Linguistics diploma.

Research environment

There is no way to educate researchers without integrating them into a research environment. For this reason, UiL OTS includes into its membership the 50 MA students we have at any particular moment, apart from roughly 20 full professors, 10 post-docs and 40 PhD stu-



dents. MA students are encouraged to participate in the summer and winter schools organised by the national research school of linguistics (Landelijke Onderzoeksschool Taalwetenschap, LOT) and to attend conferences. In addition, students may benefit from the large number of short-term visitors coming to UiL OTS, enhancing exposure to ideas and developments from all over the world.

Sample course descriptions

- The **Research Seminar** provides a common background on each of the subdisciplines you might choose as your major. One main topic is selected and complemented by presentations from research seminars, lectures from workshops and conferences and individual presentations by UiL OTS researchers.
- **Methods of Experimental Research** trains you how to design, conduct, analyse and publish your own experiments. This requires good knowledge of current research methods and techniques, and of their limitations. This course addresses such topics as: scientific method, the empirical cycle, ANOVA (including repeated measures), regression and GLM, signal detection theory, nonparametric data analysis, and the relations between significance, power and effect size.
- **Language Typology** is the systematic study of the similarities and differences between the world's languages. It searches for universal properties or systematic patterns of variation and classifies these phenomena along genetic, areal or structural lines, the primary tool for which is the electronic database. The course combines typological theory with hands-on database design.
- The aim of **Language Acquisition and Linguistic Theory** is to prepare you for the scientific discussion of a number of theoretical and empirical issues in current language acquisition research. The key issue here is the relation between the 'logical problem of language acquisition' and the 'problem of actual language development'. You will acquire a basic understanding of offline first language acquisition research.
- **Foundations of Phonology** investigates the role of structures and representations in the phonological component of a generative grammar. The aim of this course is to familiarise you with phonological-theoretical tools, which have been introduced since the early 1970s to explain phenomena such as the relation between word stress and syllable structure.

Master's thesis

Writing a Master's thesis is the major objective of the second year of the Linguistics programme. The entire fourth semester is dedicated to it. The topic of the Master's thesis should be integrated in ongoing research at UiL OTS and is chosen in consultation with one of the Linguistics instructors. Each thesis is supervised by one or more instructors, and always assessed by at least two. In all cases (regardless of the major track studied), students are expected to make a genuine contribution to the advancement of the knowledge in the field.

Facilities for Dutch and international students

Due to its high level of experience receiving researchers from abroad, MA students receive a warm welcome at UiL OTS. The graduate programme coordinator gets in touch with you as soon as you have been accepted and monitors the enrolment process with the assistance of such faculty and university services as the Foreign Relations office, Housing and Admissions offices. Utrecht University offers assistance in immigration procedures and finding student housing if you have been accepted and you comply with the relevant enrolment deadlines. During the compulsory introductory week in September, you receive a thorough introduction to the Institute, the faculty and the University as a whole, including introductory presentations on all courses by their respective instructors. Specific faculty members have been designated to perform individual tutoring and provide advice on course choices.

The UiL OTS main building (Janskerkhof 13) houses state-of-the-art laboratories for sound recording, eye tracking, a baby lab, as well as



a common room for our students to work and socialise. All facilities, lecture rooms, library, computer rooms and labs are within walking distance of each other. Preceding the first (introductory) week of term in September (the first full week in September), UiL OTS organises linguistics courses as part of the Utrecht Summer School, which our new MA students can attend free of charge. These courses, conducted during the two weeks preceding the introduction, have proved particularly useful in introducing new students to the kind of linguistics taught in this programme.

The Boswell Institute offers affordable Dutch courses to Utrecht University students.

Internship

During the internship, you become acquainted with actual research practice by participation in a research project carried out by a senior researcher or a PhD student at UiL OTS. Depending on your major track, the internship may involve a literature study, preparation of and participation in experiments, oral and written presentations, etc.

You may either cooperate with a project leader to develop your own partial project or accept one of the partial projects offered by a project leader in their project. You are encouraged to spend your internship at other research groups in the Netherlands or abroad, or to involve researchers from those research groups in your internship project. It is obviously a good idea to start organising the internship at an early stage during the first semester or even before the summer, so that you can complete the internship during the second half of the semester without any delays. In many cases, the topic of the internship will develop into the topic

of the Master's thesis.

Projects currently running at UiL OTS and open to internships include specific projects like a comparison of language acquisition by children with Specific Language Impairment and dyslexia, a number of projects on different types of aphasia, on the ordering of acquisition steps in first language acquisition, the range of cross-linguistic variation in the expression of anaphoric relations, the relationship between acoustic and form properties of words, the causes of the unexpectedly low performance in foreign language learners in their writing, and on the way different types of sentence fragments relate to each other and inherit properties from each other. Furthermore, students can participate in a study of the effects of ageing on speech perception and their underlying causes, of the effect of argument structure on adult language processing, of the relevance of cognitive principles for discourse phenomena like connectivity and coherence, and of conflict resolution in the interpretation of a sentence.

Requirements

Admission requirements

The MA Linguistics is a selective programme. All applicants are evaluated with respect to the following requirements:

- Knowledge of linguistics testified by a BA in linguistics or a related field, which includes written work (to be included in the application).

'Related fields' include psychology, information science, language degree, speech therapy, etc. Its linguistic component should comprise at least 45 ECTS. You can also apply with a BA from Utrecht University College or Roosevelt Academy, provided your credits include all linguistically oriented subjects available in the curriculum. The same applies to other liberal arts colleges, subject to evaluation in individual cases.

- Interest in scientific research

This may show from a specific academic interest you express in your letter of motivation, academic or non-academic activities you have undertaken alongside or as part of your BA course, etc.

- Excellent academic record

Your academic record should show a minimum mark of 80% (A-) in the relevant subjects, particularly written work.

- Good English

A TOEFL score of 600 is a requirement for admission to the programme, unless you are a native speaker of English or if you have a BA from a programme taught in English, a BA in English or a Dutch VWO diploma. An interview (in person or by phone) may be part of the admission procedure and is partly intended to evaluate your communication skills in English.

Career prospects

The MA Linguistics programme prepares those who want to pursue an academic career for application to PhD programmes.

If this is your aim, you will leave with a research proposal in hand and ready for use in applications of that type or easily adaptable to them. If, after completing this degree programme, you decide to leave the academic arena, you are fully equipped to apply for positions where your thorough knowledge, research abilities and insight in the structure and use of language are relevant. Here you might think of trainee positions in the field of education, language technology, advisory positions in first and second language teaching and policymaking, or junior project research positions in research institutes, industry or government.

The MA thesis may take the form of a proposal for a research project for application to a PhD programme. It could also be a proposal for a research-driven project, in which case the thesis will be a follow-up on an internship in a field of applied or experimental linguistics, for example, computational linguistics, discourse studies, phonetics, but also language acquisition.

Utrecht University encourages its MA graduates to enrol in its own PhD programmes. Of the 18 PhD students accepted by the UiL OTS PhD programme in 2006 and 2007, nine are Utrecht University MA Linguistics graduates. UiL OTS PhD students receive generous year round grants from the Institute, enabling them to work on their dissertations in comfort. Financial security is a well-known factor in the success rate of PhD programmes around the world.

Interview with graduates Marie-Elise van der Ziel & Min Que



Marie-Elise van der Ziel, second-year student from the Netherlands (started in 2006) specialising in language acquisition:

"I really enjoy this programme. During my BA, I could take linguistics subjects

"New ground is covered in each lecture"

and I enjoyed them, but they did not really require so much from me academically. Now, new ground is covered in each course and each lecture. I can't sit back and relax, but I'm getting so much more out of it because of that!"

An international PhD student at UiL OTS, Min Que (photo on page 6) specialises in the syntax-semantics interface, comparing the properties of Germanic and Chinese noun phrases. She enrolled in the MA programme in September 2004.

"When I first arrived, I was very impressed with the academic atmosphere. I still am, really."

"I found the standards very high. During the first year, I had a hard time academically. It was so different from what I was used to, I really had to adjust. Luckily, the teachers were very helpful, always available and ready to answer questions. Also, I found myself in a very nice group of international students, which were very supportive among each other. We still keep in touch."

Practical Matters

Headlines

Programme duration: Two years (full-time)

Number of ECTS: 120

Teaching language: English

Starting dates: 1 September and 1 February

Application deadlines: 1 March and 1 September

Degree: Master of Arts (equivalent to MPhil)

Annual tuition fees (in 2008): € 1,750 for EU citizens, € 8,500 for non-EU citizens

Additional yearly costs: Approximately € 500 (+ living costs, travel etc)

Responsibility: UiL OTS

Programme Director: Prof. Eric Reuland

Application

If you are interested and think you are eligible for admission, please consult one of the following websites:

<http://www.uu.nl/internationalmasters>

(applicants with non-Dutch qualifications)

Click 'Admissions' and read all the information available there, including deadlines, procedure details and information about grants. Under 'Application procedure', you will find the online application form and instructions on how to complete it. If possible, print the instructions using the link at the very bottom of the webpage.

Your application will involve the submission of hard copies of several documents, so please make sure you send them to the address indicated for this purpose, which may vary depending on your situation (whether you

have a Utrecht University, Dutch or foreign BA diploma, and whether or not you are resident of the Netherlands).

Applying for programme admission, as well as any other programme at Utrecht University, involves paying an (advance) admissions fee of € 50.

<http://www.uu.nl/masters> (applicants with Dutch qualifications) > Praktische zaken > Aanmelding en Inschrijving

Enrolment

If accepted, you receive a letter of acceptance and an enrolment package including enrolment forms, application forms for housing and visas, instructions for paying the tuition fees (consult the website for details), and general information about Utrecht University and life in the Netherlands (i.e. the 'Utrecht Feel at Home' package). In order to benefit from the Utrecht Feel at Home services (assistance in finding housing and visa applications), please make sure you observe any relevant deadlines. Your enrolment is valid only after you have met your tuition fee obligations (payment in instalments is possible).

Funding

Linguistics is one of Utrecht University's Prestige Master's programmes, which means applicants may apply for an Excellence Grant covering living costs and sometimes partial tuition fees as well. Each year, UiL OTS

offers a limited number of partial tuition fee waivers and living cost grants to foreign students (i.e. the Reinhart Grants). Please indicate your interest in a Reinhart Grant in your application.

If you plan to apply for a Nuffic Huygens Grant, please aim for the early bird deadline (1 December for entrance in September the following year).

Students who have received Dutch government aid for a Dutch BA are normally entitled to a total of five years of such financial aid, covering the entire duration of the programme. In some situations, EU students are also eligible for Dutch government funding.

Further information

- <http://www.uu.nl/internationalmasters> (admission and enrolment information)
- the link to 'Linguistics/Additional information' from the previous site (programme, course descriptions, schedules)
- UiL OTS homepage ('MA and PhD programme' tab) (samples of course choices based on different tracks)

For any questions regarding your specific situation, please approach the MA Linguistics

Coordinator: Dr Maaïke Schoorlemmer
maaïke.schoorlemmer@let.uu.nl

UiL OTS uil-ots@let.uu.nl
Janskerkhof 13
3512 BL Utrecht
The Netherlands
Tel.: + 31 (0)30 253 6006
Fax: + 31 (0)30 253 6406