

Dual BA/MA program proposal

Department of Linguistics*

March 16, 2011

Summary

This program is designed to enable a Linguistics student to earn a dual BA and MA by completing some of the regular MA requirements during the undergraduate program.

1 Background

Linguistics is the scientific study of language, its structure, function, acquisition and use. Insights from linguistics find application in a wide range of other domains such as psychology, computer science, education, and speech-language pathology. The department now offers the BA and MA degrees in Linguistics (a PhD program was ended in 2010 as being inviably small). The BA curriculum is designed to acquaint undergraduates with some of the basic results of the discipline and to foster the advanced skills in problem analysis and communication that are prerequisites to full participation in the work of knowledge creation. The MA curriculum has focused on rigorous training in the core areas of linguistics as a foundation for employment or doctoral study.

2 Rationale

2.1 Student demand

With 7 full-time faculty (equivalent), the Department of Linguistics produces about 30 BAs annually. These students typically arrive with multiple Advanced Placement credits and take overloads. About half of them are double majors in a variety of other departments.

*This proposal was prepared by Misha Becker, Director of Undergraduate Studies (mbecker@email.unc.edu), and Elliott Moreton, Director of Graduate Admissions and Director of Graduate Studies (moreton@email.unc.edu). It incorporates some language from a previous proposal by the Department of Computer Science.

The 145 students who entered Carolina between 2001 and 2006 and graduated with Linguistics BAs by 2010 had on average 135 credit hours at graduation, or about 5 courses more than needed for the BA. As of January 2011, there are 64 juniors or seniors who have declared Linguistics as a first or second major. They have, on average, 20.8 hours of AP or by-exam credit — nearly 7 courses. These are averages, so many of our more-motivated students have more than that. There is therefore a sizable pool of undergraduate Linguistics majors who could graduate in 3.5 years, or even in 3, but who remain at Carolina longer and graduate with more credits than needed for the BA degree.

Many of our strongest undergraduates (those who would likely be candidates for the dual degree BA/MA program) already enroll in our graduate-level (500-level) courses. For example, LING 528 (the graduate-level version of LING 203) had an enrollment of 13 in Fall 2010, and 7 of those students were undergraduates. LING 520 had an enrollment of 18 in Fall 2009, of whom 16 were undergraduates. Therefore, even without the proposed program in place, many of our undergraduates are satisfying requirements for the MA program.

We recently conducted an informal survey of all current Linguistics majors (Jan. 2011) in which we asked about the level of interest in a dual degree BA/MA program and the number of Advanced Placement credits the students had when they entered Carolina. We received 30 responses, i.e., about 1/3 of current majors, distributed as follows:

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Definitely interested. . .	
. . . with ≥ 30 AP credits	10
. . . with 15 to 30 AP credits	6
. . . with < 15 AP credits	5
Would consider	8
Not interested	1
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Seven of the survey respondents indicated that an MA in Linguistics would be a terminal degree for them. Eight of the survey respondents indicated that they would use the MA earned at UNC to pursue a PhD at another university. An additional 7 selected both options (terminal and non-terminal degree), suggesting that although they were unsure of their future plans, they were nevertheless interested in the possibility of obtaining an MA degree in Linguistics at UNC together with their BA degree.

We are continually impressed with the quality of our undergraduates, and while a good number of them have been accepted to top-tier PhD programs straight out of the BA program, a number of very qualified undergraduates have been disappointed by the highly competitive nature of doctoral program admissions. We believe that such students will have a significantly better chance of being accepted to top-tier PhD programs elsewhere if they have an MA in addition to their BA.

2.2 Outlook for graduates

The principal immediate uses of the Linguistics MA as a credential would be employment and higher-level graduate or professional study. While the job market everywhere is difficult at the moment, it is perpetually the case that job applicants with an advanced degree stand a better chance of being hired, and being hired at a better salary, than job applicants with only a BA.

Linguists work in a wide variety of areas in industry, government, and education. Here are some job openings, currently advertised at linguistlist.org (a professional organization), which do not require a PhD:

- *Senior acquisitions editor*, language textbooks, Georgetown University Press. “Master’s degree; preference given to education beyond master’s level.”
- *Computational linguist*, machine-translation customization, Lionbridge Technologies. “Bachelors degree or higher in linguistics, computational linguistics, or modern languages.”
- *Naming consultant* for product and brand names, Interbrand. “B.A. degree, backgrounds of interest include any verbal-focused or writing intensive field (e.g. Linguistics, Creative Writing, Foreign Language, Philosophy, etc).”
- *Senior engineer*, natural-language processing and content extraction, Northrop-Grumman. “MS/MA degree in linguistics, computer science, mathematics, engineering, or related field with Ph.D. preferred.”
- *Computational linguist* for designing directed-dalogue applications, Voxify. “A degree in Computational Linguistics, Linguistics, Applied Mathematics, Computer Science or a related field.”
- *Translator*, English-French-German, Hewlett-Packard. “Undergraduate degree preferred or equivalent.”
- *Lexicographer* for glossary websites, WebFinance, Inc. “A concentration in Computational/General Lexicography, Computational/General Linguistics, or a closely related field is ideal.”
- *Lexicon/grammar developer* for multilingual text-mining applications, Clarabridge Engineering. (No degree mentioned.)
- *Senior linguist* for building speech-recognition tools, Sensory, Inc. “B.A. / B.S. or higher degree in Linguistics.”
- *Data quality analyst*, Factual, Inc. “A degree in engineering, science, or linguistics.”

- *Consultant*, research and product development, Gap International. “Successful candidates must have formal training and an undergraduate degree in linguistics.”

Between 2003 and 2010, our department granted 22 MAs. Five of these students continued directly on to the PhD program (which no longer exists). The careers of the other 17 are as follows:

- Further graduate school: 5
 - PhD in Linguistics at Stanford, now Senior Research Engineer at Nuance Communications
 - PhD program in Linguistics, Cornell University
 - PhD program in French, University of British Columbia
 - Law school
 - MS program, Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, UNC–Chapel Hill
- Job in education: 4
 - Lecturer, Department of Asian Studies, UNC-Chapel Hill (also PhD student in Linguistics)
 - Director of Education, Sylvan Learning Center
 - Visiting lecturer in English as a Second Language, University of Indiana
 - Instructor, The College at Southeastern in Wake Forest
- Other job: 2
 - Lab manager, Department of Psychology, Duke University
 - Editor and quality control technician at Global Knowledge
- No certain information at present: 6

3 Current program requirements

The BA curriculum has recently been changed so that prospective BA/MA students can avoid overlap between core BA and core MA required courses (see discussion in §5.4). For the BA in Linguistics, the following 8 courses are now required in addition to the requirements of the College of Arts and Sciences, starting in 2011.

Gateway course: LING 101 Introduction.

Core requirements: One course from each of three of the following pairs:

LING 200 Phonology	<i>or</i>	LING 520 Linguistic Phonetics
LING 201 Syntax	<i>or</i>	LING 537 Semantic Theory
LING 202 Ling. Variation and Change	<i>or</i>	LING 541 Sociolinguistics
LING 203 Lang. Acquisition and Dev.	<i>or</i>	LING 540 Mathematical Linguistics

Electives: Four LING courses numbered 200 to 699 (excluding 400, 523, 525, 528, and 530).

For the MA, the requirements include

Gateway course: LING 400, or approved substitute.

Core requirements: All of LING 520 (Phonetics), 523 (Phonology I), and 530 (Syntax I), plus one course from among LING 525 (Historical and Comparative), 528 (Language Acquisition), and 537 (Morphology) (total of four courses). These courses are offered annually or biennially.

Electives: Four electives in linguistics or related areas, as approved by the student's advisor. Please note that the above pairs of 200-level and 500-level courses are non-duplicative, so that if a student from our BA program continues to our MA program they may take all 8 courses listed above without repeating course content.

Comprehensive oral exam: The student must defend the thesis prospectus, and satisfy the examining committee as to his or her mastery of topics from the first year's coursework. This normally occurs in the fall of the second year.

Thesis: A research thesis written under the supervision of a thesis director and thesis committee, and defended in a final oral examination. This entails one three-hour unit of thesis credit, normally taken in the spring of the second year.

Language requirement: Reading knowledge of one foreign language. This requirement can be met by passing the Graduate Student Foreign Language Test, by passing a 602-level graduate course, or by certification by a qualified faculty member.

4 Proposed structure

A Carolina BA requires 120 credits; the MA requires 30. A BA/MA student would be allowed to transfer 9 credits earned as an undergraduate to the MA program, as long as at least 120 credits remained to satisfy the BA requirements. A prospective BA/MA student should proceed as follows:

1. Accumulate at least 120 credits' worth of courses towards the undergraduate BA, either by taking the courses outright, or by using Advanced Placement or credit-by-examination.

2. In addition to these 120 credits, the student should take three more courses from the 500-level MA required courses, for a total of at least 129 credits. Students will satisfy their BA degree requirements by December of their 4th year. (See attached sample programs of study.)
3. At the end of the third year, or beginning of the fourth, the student applies to the MA program and is admitted on the condition that they satisfy, and continue to satisfy, the requirements for admission described below.
4. In the spring of the 4th year, the student enters the MA program, having completed one semester's worth of MA requirements as an undergraduate. They take the remaining credits and complete the thesis along with the regular MA students.

On the basis of the survey of majors, we expect initially about 5–10 BA/MA students per cohort, in addition to our current annual intake of 3–4 MA students. The Department of Linguistics already offers all of the courses which MA students would need, so no extra resources would be required to start the new degree program.

5 Advising, admission, and support

5.1 Recruitment and intake advising

Students will be made aware of the BA/MA program through ordinary channels such as major advising and the departmental website. Interested students will first meet with the Director of Undergraduate Studies to plan an undergraduate schedule that will position them for transition to the MA by taking MA core courses.

To be eligible to apply for the BA/MA program, a student should, by the end of the sixth semester,

- Have completed at least two of the three BA core requirements, and at least one course at the 500 level or above;
- Maintain a minimum overall GPA of 3.300, and GPA in Linguistics of 3.500
- Have met with the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss
 - *Feasibility*: Whether the student, given his or her background and performance, is likely to complete both degrees successfully, and
 - *Utility*: Whether the student, given his or her interest and goals, is likely to benefit from the MA compared to other post-BA paths.

On the basis of the above-mentioned survey of majors, we have identified several prospective BA/MA students. They are aware of our pending proposal, and we will be ready to discuss their plans and begin advising those who are interested as soon as the proposal is approved.

5.2 Application and notification

A student should submit an application for graduate study in Linguistics to the UNC Graduate School by the end of the 6th semester of study. The student should provide the names of two or three UNC Linguistics faculty members to serve as references. The Admissions Committee will contact them directly, and other faculty members may also be consulted. Additional recommendations from outside of the Linguistics Department or of UNC are welcome as well; they should be sent directly to the committee. Students are not required to submit GRE scores, but are encouraged to consider providing them as supporting materials.

Notification of acceptance is normally received no later than the 7th semester of study at UNC.

5.3 Undergraduate financial aid

If a student has a four-year undergraduate scholarship, it is important to insure that they do not forfeit this advantage by an early transition to the MA program. The Department will work with the Graduate School on individual cases to guard against this possibility.

5.4 Entrance and exit flexibility

Most students will probably begin taking courses to fulfill their BA requirements before they start planning for a dual degree. The BA and MA requirements are set up so that course choices early in the BA career do not pre-empt courses that the student will later want to transfer to the MA program.

Each of the BA core requirements can be fulfilled with either a 200-level undergraduate course or a 500-level graduate course. Although the courses in each pair are in the same general subfield of linguistics, their content does not overlap, so that a student can take either or both of them and count the 500-level course towards either the BA or the MA. This affords flexibility in entry and exit timing:

- *200, then 500*: A student who takes the 200-level course to fulfill a BA requirement can later take the corresponding 500-level course to fulfill an MA requirement. The 500-level course can be taken either before or after finishing the BA.
- *500, then 200*: A student who takes the 500-level course to fulfill a BA requirement may subsequently decide to do a BA/MA. In that case, the student can redesignate the 500-level course as applicable to the MA, and take the corresponding 200-level course to replace it in the BA requirements.

For example, a student who takes LING 520 as a sophomore to satisfy the BA phonology/phonetics requirement, then decides to go for a BA/MA, can redesignate LING 520 to satisfy the MA phonetics requirement, and then satisfy the BA phonology/phonetics requirement by taking LING 200.

- *200 and 500, then exit*: Suppose BA/MA student takes the 200-level course and the corresponding 500-level course, intending to apply the latter to the MA requirements, then changes his or her mind and decides to stop with the BA. (Proper screening of candidates should make such exits rare, but they can still happen if, e.g., changing circumstances leave a student unable to afford school.) In that case, the 500-level course can be redesignated to count as BA electives, so that the student can use it to accelerate progress towards the BA.

6 Other supporting materials

The following tables show BA/MA schedules for hypothetical students with different amounts of AP credit and different double majors. The specific AP courses and double majors are the ones that are most frequent for our majors, as established by UNC's Office of Institutional Research. Note: (c) means the course fulfills a Core requirement for the Linguistics major; (e) means the course fulfills an Elective requirement for the Linguistics major.

AP	Undergraduate				Graduate		Credits
	1	2	3	4	5		
MATH 231 QR HIST 127 HS NA US HIST 128 HS NA BIOL 101 PL	LING 101 SS FL (level 2) LFIT PX (4 hrs) ENGL CR (4hrs) (15 hrs)	LING 201 c2 conn. or PL conn. WB conn. EE elec (15 hrs)	LING 310 e2 *LING 520 conn. CI Sup Ed 1 elec elec (18 hrs)	LING 558 HS/e4 *LING 537 LING 540 QI Sup Ed 3 elec elec (18 hrs)		*LING 524 *LING 542 *LING 415 (9 hrs)	
	LING 200 c1 FL (level 3) LA VP elec (15 hours)	LING 202 c3 LING 560 BN/e1 PH elec elec elec (18 hrs)	LING 333 SS/e3 *LING 541 Sup Ed 2 elec elec elec (18 hrs)		*LING 523 *LING 525 *LING 530 (9 hrs)	*LING 992 (3 hrs)	
12 BA	30 BA	33 BA	30 BA 6 MA	15 BA 3 MA	9 MA	12 MA	120 BA 30 MA

Table 1: Student enters UNC with 12 AP credits (six fewer than the average for Linguistics majors, but typical for the College of Arts and Sciences as a whole), and takes LING 101 in the first semester. No double major. Credits counted towards the MA are marked with *.

AP	Undergraduate				Graduate		Credits
	1	2	3	4	5		
MATH 231 QR HIST 127 HS NA US (ENGL 101) BIOL 101 PL (SPAN 204) FL	ENGL CR (4hrs) conn. WB LFIT PX (4 hrs) SPAN 204 (15 hrs)	LING 203 c1 SPAN 371 SPAN 376 e1 conn. GL elec elec (18 hrs)	LING 202 c3 LING 540 QI/e2 SPAN 345 elec elec elec (18 hrs)	LING 541 e4 *LING 527 SPAN 371 SS elec elec (18 hrs)		*LING 537 *LING 541 *LING 533 (9 hrs)	
	LING 101 SS SPAN 300 elec VP elec elec (18 hours)	LING 200 c2 *LING 545 SPAN 372 conn. EE conn. BN (15 hrs)	LING 545 PH/e3 *LING 520 SPAN 361 conn. CI elec elec (18 hrs)		*LING 523 *LING 525 *LING 530 (9 hrs)	*LING 992 (3 hrs)	
9 BA	33 BA	30 BA 3 MA	33 BA 3 MA	15 BA 3 MA	9 MA	12 MA	120 BA 30 MA

Table 2: Student enters UNC with 9 AP credits (9 fewer than the average for Linguistics majors), takes LING 101 in the second semester, and does a double major with Spanish. Credits counted towards the MA are marked with *.

AP	Undergraduate				Graduate		Credits
	1	2	3	4	5		
MATH 231 QR HIST 127 HS NA US HIST 128 HS NA BIOL 101 PL (SPAN 204) FL ENGL 190 LA	ENGL CR (4hrs) elec LFIT PX (4 hrs) COMM 120 (15 hrs)	LING 101 SS VP conn. EE conn. GL elec elec (18 hrs)	LING 310 e2 *LING 520 SPHS 540 e3 COMM elec 1 conn. CI (15 hrs)	LING 540 QI/c3 *LING 537 SPHS 530 SPHS 582 COMM elec 3 COMM elec 4 (18 hrs)		*LING 528 *LING 542 *LING 547 (9 hrs)	
	COMM 140 COMM 160 conn. BN LA elec elec (18 hours)	LING 202 c1 LING 444 WB/e1 PH elec elec (15 hrs)	LING 200 c2 *LING 527 SPHS 570 e4 COMM elec 2 elec elec (18 hrs)		*LING 523 *LING 525 *LING 530 (9 hrs)	*LING 992 (3 hrs)	
15 BA	33 BA	33 BA	27 BA 6 MA	15 BA 3 MA	9 MA	12 MA	120 BA 30 MA

Table 3: Student enters UNC with 15 AP credits (3 fewer than the average for Linguistics majors), takes LING 101 in the third semester, and does a double major with Communications, a common path for those interested in speech pathology. Credits counted towards the MA are marked with *.



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03/19/11

Professor Erika Lindemann
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula
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Dear Dean Lindemann,

I am writing to you in regard to the Linguistics Department's proposal for a dual BA/MA program, which is to go before the Administrative Boards of the General College and the College of Arts and Sciences on 30 *inst.*

This proposal has the full support of the faculty of the Department of Linguistics. As interim chair, I am pleased to approve it on behalf of the department.

Please do not hesitate to contact me and/or Professor Elliott Moreton (our director of graduate studies) should you require further information or have questions.

With kind regards, I am

Very truly yours,

s/ Paul T. Roberge

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