

Language Documentation as a Tool for Post-Baccalaureate Success



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Linguistics at Boise State University

The linguistics program at Boise State University is an undergraduate major housed in the English department.

- There are approximately 60 undergraduate students in the program.
- Students major in English with a Linguistics emphasis.
- Recent University curriculum revisions require all students to enroll in a senior capstone experience prior to graduation.
- Currently, all students enrolled in the program enroll in a capstone course focusing on **linguistic field methods**.

Linguistics Capstone in Field Methods

The linguistics capstone course is designed as a culminating experience for undergraduate linguistics students, relying on skills and knowledge learned in other linguistics courses in order to document a refugee language.

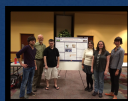
Students must also University Learning Outcomes (ULOs) for Finishing Foundation courses, designed to help students with post-baccalaureate success:

- ULO 1 (Write Effectively): Students write and submit grammar sketches
- ULO 2 (Oral Communication): Students present findings at the annual Undergraduate Research and Scholarship Conference, and at course conference at the end of the semester
- ULO 3 (Critical Inquiry): Students document an unfamiliar language
- ULO 4 (Teamwork): Students work in groups to gather language data
- ULO 6 (Diversity and Internationalization): Students work with New Americans, learning about resettlement issues and linguistic diversity

Post-Capstone Documentation Opportunities

Faculty members work with community leadership to determine language documentation needs for each of the languages documented through the Boise Language Project. Projects are community and language specific. Current projects include:

- A Somali-Chizigula/English – English/Somali-Chizigula dictionary (over 12,000 entries)
- A bilingual children's storybook in Maay and English
- A compilation of proverbs in Ebembe, with English translations



The Boise Language Project

Over 1000 refugees are resettled in Boise every year, leading to linguistic diversity not otherwise found in Idaho.

- The Boise Language Project integrates language documentation, teaching and learning, and community outreach by training undergraduate students in the documentation of languages spoken by New Americans who arrive in the US as refugees.
- Languages and language-specific documentation projects are selected in consultation with community leadership each year.
- Documentation begins during the capstone course.

In addition to learning about issues pertaining to language endangerment and language documentation, students must also be trained in issues having to do with the refugee experience and refugee resettlement:

- PTSD related to experiences in homeland and refugee camps abroad, as well as the move to the US (this is especially important to consider in elicitation preparation).
- All aspects of displacement and the refugee resettlement process, including language training for adults and citizenship requirements.
- Students' understanding of these issues leads to volunteering and seeking employment with the many local refugee resettlement agencies. Agencies constantly praise linguistics students and graduates for their preparation.

Other Opportunities to Work with New Americans

There are several opportunities for linguistics students to work with New Americans while at Boise State:

- Several linguistics courses offer Service-Learning opportunities involving refugee resettlement training.
- Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders) offers opportunities to assist elders with English language learning in preparation for their naturalization interview to become US citizens.



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