

03 May 2023

On behalf of the Board of trustees of the Academia Europaea



## **A plea to the Spanish government to retain Linguistics alongside Philology within the range of critical disciplines.**

with reference to the

“Proyecto de Real Decreto por el que se establecen los Ámbitos de Conocimiento a Efectos de la Adscripción de los Puestos de Trabajo del Profesorado Universitario”

The Spanish government has proposed to remove support for the study of Linguistics as a distinct and critical discipline for Universities in the Spanish system, whilst retaining Philology as a distinct discipline.

The Academia Europaea wishes to express its strongest opposition to this move, for the reasons set out below.

1. Linguistics is the scientific study of language and how it is acquired, produced, and understood. It is a field that explores the structure, meaning, and function of language in all its forms, including spoken, written, signed, and gestured language.
2. Linguistics is a multidisciplinary field that draws on insights from psychology, neuroscience, computer science, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines. As such, it has the potential to bridge gaps between different fields of study and promote interdisciplinary collaboration.
3. Linguistics has a wide range of subfields that explore different aspects of language. These include phonetics (the study of speech sounds), phonology (the study of sound systems), morphology (the study of word structure), syntax (the study of sentence structure), semantics (the study of meaning), pragmatics (the study of language use in context), historical linguistics (the study of how languages change with time), psycholinguistics (the study of language and the mind) and sociolinguistics (the study of language in society). It has practical applications in many fields. For example, natural language processing (NLP) technologies rely heavily on Linguistics research and are used in a variety of applications such as search engines, machine translation, and speech recognition. Linguistics also informs language education and policy, as well as the development of tools for language assessment, diagnosis and treatment.
4. Linguistics is a cross-cutting field. As both a basic and an applied science, it is an integral part of many degree programs that belong to different fields of study, Linguistics has official recognition in institutions and government policies all around the world as a basic subject and, therefore, a fundamental field of knowledge in the Arts and Humanities branch. The research methods of modern linguistics have become a model and paradigm for other disciplines apparently unrelated to it, such as

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Anthropology. This cross-cutting nature provides yet another argument in favour of the proposal to maintain Linguistics as an independent field.

5. Linguistics is recognised as a major and independent research field in academia worldwide. It is a well-established field with a strong presence at international conferences and in scholarly journals. There are also several international organizations dedicated to Linguistics. It is part of the UNESCO International Nomenclature for Science and Technology fields as one of the 24 main codes (<https://skos.um.es/unesco6/00/html>) used by UNESCO to organize knowledge. Most of these main codes have also been included as fields of knowledge in this Real Decreto, but Linguistics (UNESCO code 57) has not been included. The Academia Europaea includes the Linguistic Studies section within Class A1 (Humanities and Arts). Linguistics is also one of the descriptors in the Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus. WOS includes Language & Linguistics and Linguistics as categories in the Journal Citation Reports™, comprising 647 indexed journals. Scopus has the category Language & Linguistics and records 1135 indexed journals (<https://www.scopus.com/search/form.uri?display=basic#basic>).

The descriptor *Linguistics* is also included in the QS ranking for the Arts and Humanities. MIT (<https://linguistics.mit.edu/faculty/>) ranks #1, and in the list for 2023, two Spanish universities have been ranked among the top 100 universities, the Autonomous University of Barcelona (ranked 91st) and the Complutense University of Madrid (ranked 98th).

6. Whilst Linguistics and Philology are related fields, they are distinct and have different focuses. Philology, in the sense in which that term is used in Spanish, is a broad field that encompasses the study of language and literature, including the historical, cultural, and social contexts of language and literature. It involves the close examination and interpretation of texts in their original language, with the aim of understanding their historical context and cultural significance. Linguistics, on the other hand, is a scientific field that emerged in the 19th century as the study of how language structures change and how earlier stages of languages can be reconstructed. It is concerned with the study of language as a system of communication. It involves the analysis and description of language structure, including its sounds, words, sentences, and meanings, and the investigation of how language is acquired, processed, and used by humans, and the mechanisms by which languages change. One of the key differences between Linguistics (including historical linguistics) and Philology is their methods of inquiry. While Philology often employs more qualitative and interpretive approaches to analyze texts and cultural artifacts, Linguistics is grounded in empirical research, using quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate language structure, use, and change. Furthermore, while philology deals with written texts, linguistics is concerned with both the written and the oral expression of the language. Hence, it has a broader scope than philology and cannot be part of it.

Therefore, while Linguistics and Philology share some common ground, they are distinct fields with different approaches and focuses. Linguistics is not a subfield of Philology, but rather a field of study in its own right in the academic environment worldwide. Linguistics has made groundbreaking discoveries about language structure, language change, language acquisition, and language processing, and continues to push the boundaries of our understanding of language and its role in human cognition and behavior.



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Prepared by the Linguistic Studies Committee

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This statement is endorsed on behalf of the trustees. Of the Academia Euroapea

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