LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES

While the scientific study of language is known as linguistics and is generally considered as a *social science*, a natural science or a cognitive science, the study of languages is still central to the *humanities*.

A good deal of twentieth-century and twenty-first century philosophy has been devoted to the analysis of language and to the question of whether, as Wittgenstein claimed, many of our philosophical confusions derive from the vocabulary we use; literary theory has explored the rhetorical associative, and ordering features of language; and historical linguists have studied the development of languages across time.

Linguistics is divided into areas that focus on aspects of the linguistic signal, such as syntax (the study of rules that govern the structure of sentences), semantics (the study of meaning), morphology (the study of the structure of words), phonetics (the study of speech sounds) and phonology (the study of the abstract sound system of a particular language); however, work in areas like evolutionary linguistics (the study of the origins and evolution of languages) and psycholinguistics (the study of psychological factors in human language) cut across these divisions.