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### **FRAMEWORK OF FUTURE LINGUISTS' RESEARCH ACTIVITIES: THE UK EXPERIENCE**

#### **ABSTRACT**

*In the UK, research training of future linguists plays a rather important role in developing their scientific culture and mindset, research stance and also fosters respect for scientific contributions from other members of the scientific community within and outside the UK. Research training of future linguists in British universities is characterized by diversified research activities (linguists projects, bachelor / master dissertations, organization of student scientific conferences, compilation of research bibliographies); prevalence of independent research activities over classroom work. Linguistic projects can be compulsory and optional. Research training in linguistics with their help covers all years of study. The structure of bachelor and master dissertations in linguistics is not significantly different and usually consists of the following components: a) title page; b) abstract; c) introduction; d) analysis of recent publications; e) research methodology; e) output data and their analysis; e) discussion; g) conclusions; h) sources used. British universities also involve candidates in departmental research projects. This allows future linguists to work side-by-side with their lecturers, promote their own research portfolios, participate in modern linguistic research and gain the valuable experience they will apply in their professional activities, in particular in the research field. The authors of the article believe that it is also important to establish linguistic circles, which should include meetings with the leading linguists. Based on the analyzed data, one can determine the following characteristics of future linguists' research activities in British universities: a) diversification of research activities (implementing linguistic projects, writing bachelor / master dissertations, organizing student scientific conferences, compiling research references); b) prevalence of independent work over classroom work (1:2); c) active collaboration of British higher education institutions with the Linguistics Association of Great Britain; d) introduction of financial and individual incentives into research activities; e) involvement of future linguists in departmental research projects in linguistics; f) effective development of future linguists' research portfolio (improving their skills in using information technologies, teamwork skills and organizational skills).*

**Keywords:** linguistics, linguist, research, research activities, the UK, linguistic project, bachelor / master dissertation.

#### **АНОТАЦІЯ**

*Науково-дослідницька підготовка майбутніх фахівців з лінгвістики в університетах Великої Британії відіграє надзвичайно важливе значення в процесі формування їхньої наукової культури та світогляду, дослідницької позиції, а також виховує в них повагу до наукових доробків інших учасників наукової спільноти не лише на теренах Великої Британії, а й у світі. В університетах Великої Британії науково-дослідницька підготовка майбутніх фахівців з лінгвістики насамперед передбачає виконання мовних (лінгвістичних) дослідницьких проектів («language projects») на*



бакалаврському рівні, написання дисертації («dissertation») – на бакалаврському й магістерському рівнях. Крім того, британські університети впроваджують різноманітні дослідницькі модулі. Лінгвістичні проекти бувають обов'язкові та вибіркові. Структура бакалаврської й магістерської дисертації у галузі лінгвістики суттєво не відрізняється, зазвичай, містить такі складники: а) титульний аркуш; б) анотація; в) вступ; г) аналіз останніх досліджень і публікацій; д) методологія дослідження; е) вихідні дані та їх аналіз; є) обговорення результатів дослідження; ж) висновок; з) список використаних джерел. Деякі університети рекомендують передбачити в дисертації аналіз методології дослідження, характеристику лінгвістичного корпусу, перспективи подальших студій. Структура дисертації, що планують проведення експерименту, суттєво відрізняється й повинна містити такі компоненти: а) титульний аркуш; б) вступ, в) методологія дослідження; г) учасники експерименту; д) умови експерименту; е) хід роботи; є) результати дослідження; ж) обговорення; з) висновки; и) додатки. У британських університетах практикують залучення студентів до дослідницьких проектів, над якими працює кафедра. Це дає змогу майбутнім фахівцям працювати пліч-о-пліч зі своїми викладачами, просувати власне дослідницьке портфоліо, брати участь у сучасних лінгвістичних дослідженнях й отримувати безцінний досвід, який знадобиться їм у професійній діяльності, зокрема в науковій. На нашу думку, ще однією вдалою ініціативою є заснування лінгвістичних гуртків, які передбачають зустрічі з провідними лінгвістами. На підставі викладу виокремимо такі особливості науково-дослідницької підготовки майбутніх фахівців з лінгвістики в університетах Великої Британії: диверсифікація науково-дослідницької діяльності (виконання мовних проектів, написання бакалаврських / магістерських дисертацій, організація студентських наукових конференцій, розроблення дослідницьких бібліографій); переважання самостійної науково-дослідницької діяльності над аудиторною (1:2); активна співпраця британських закладів вищої освіти з Асоціацією лінгвістики у Великій Британії; запровадження системи заохочень майбутніх фахівців з лінгвістики до провадження науково-дослідницької діяльності; залучення майбутніх фахівців з лінгвістики до кафедральних дослідницьких проектів у галузі лінгвістики; ефективне сприяння розвитку портфоліо дослідника майбутніх фахівців з лінгвістики (удосконалення навичок використання інформаційних технологій, навичок роботи в групі та індивідуально, організаторських навичок тощо).

**Ключові слова:** лінгвістика, лінгвіст, дослідження, дослідницька діяльність, Велика Британія, лінгвістичний проект, бакалаврська / магістерська дисертація.

## INTRODUCTION

In the UK, research training of future linguists plays a rather important role in developing their scientific culture and mindset, research stance and also fosters respect for scientific contributions from other members of the scientific community within and outside the UK. The analysis of scientific sources on comparative pedagogy has shown that the raised problem has not become the subject of special studies yet. This confirms the research relevance and causes the need to study innovative ideas of the UK experience in order to justify the prospects for their creative use in global educational space, in particular in the context of future linguists' research training.

To begin with, research training of future linguists in British universities is characterized by diversified research activities (linguists projects, bachelor / master dissertations, organization of student scientific conferences, compilation of research bibliographies); prevalence of independent research activities over classroom work; active



collaboration of British universities with the Linguistics Association of Great Britain; a system of financial and individual incentives for future linguists with the aim to enhance the quality of research; effective development of future linguists' research portfolios.

#### **THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

Therefore, the research aims to analyze the framework of future linguists' research activities in the context of the UK experience.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS**

*Linguistic projects.* Linguistic projects can be compulsory and optional. The number of CATS points ranges from 15 to 30, which corresponds to 7.5–15 ECTS credits. As a rule, hours are distributed between classroom and individual work in the ratio of 1:2. The number of words planned for language projects ranges from 3.000 to 9.000. Research training in linguistics with the help of linguistic projects covers all years of study (University of Leeds, 2017; University of Southampton, 2017; Bristol University of the West of England, 2017; SOAS, University of London, 2017).

For one, the University of Leeds offers *Language Projects* (LING 1060) in semester 2 as part of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Linguistics and Phonetics. Enrollment in this module is possible after successful completion of the module on *Language: Structure and Sound* in semester 1. Thus, Language Projects is designed for a total of 36 students and is equal to 20 CATS points (10 ECTS credits) (University of Leeds, 2017).

20 CATS points include 200 hours, including 20 hours for the preparatory seminar and 180 hours for individual work. The module tutor forms three groups of students (12 individuals each), who are expected to work on three group linguistic projects during the semester. The topics are focused on the languages students have never studied in the context of syntax, morphology and phonology. It must be noted that students can use different information resources (the Internet, libraries, linguistic corpora, etc.), as well as conduct their own surveys among speakers of the language under study. This kind of work is allocated 60 hours. Students should report on their findings in a written form (1000-word report) or at departmental seminars with PowerPoint presentations or posters (flipchart).

The next kind of work is allocated 20 hours and includes some research and organization. Students are divided into pairs and prepare some abstracts of articles related to the linguistic project, which they will present at the First Year Linguistics and Phonetics Research Conference. These abstracts should be accompanied by PowerPoint presentations (8 minutes) or posters (flipcharts) (4 minutes).

Subsequently, students are expected to implement their individual linguistic projects. This type of work is allocated 90 hours. In addition, students must prepare a list of relevant literary sources. It must be noted that such projects teach future linguists to explore those topics, which most fully reflect their scientific interests in linguistics and help to develop their research skills.

The authors of the article believe that this module is rather effective in terms of structure and content. Despite the fact that hours are distributed with an obvious predominance of individual work (90 %), the module tutor regularly monitors scientific progress of future linguists by means weekly seminars since this way allows correcting the trajectory of linguistic projects in case of some difficulties. Different information resources enable future linguists to collect and analyze linguistic data, in particular unfamiliar languages, prepare lists of research references, improve skills in using information technologies (PowerPoint, Word, etc), teamwork skills, organizational skills, research skills, etc.



The University of Southampton implements a similar module as part of a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language and Linguistics titled *Group Research Project* (ENGL 1087). This module is also offered in semester 2, but it is optional and allocated CATS points (7.5 ECTS credits). The module structure involves writing a group essay (2,000 words), preparing a group presentation and compiling an individual report on the implemented project (1,000 words). In addition, the module includes introductory lectures aimed at familiarizing future linguists with advanced research methods (University of Southampton, 2017).

Students are divided into several groups, normally of six people. Under the supervision of the module tutor, they choose the project topic, formulate its goals and objectives and prepare a plan. After completing the project, they should choose a way of its presenting, namely personally, on tape or online. The authors of the article state that the main advantage of this module is that when working on the project, students improve their skills in using the virtual environment, since all the corrections should be done online. That also helps students to develop skills in critical thinking, share their experience with other participants and make effective decisions.

At the Bristol University of the West of England, the implementation of linguistic projects is planned for Year 3 within a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language and Linguistics. Future linguists can choose from two types of projects, namely a theoretical empirical linguistic study (9,000 words) or a linguistic project. It must be noted that linguistic projects cover 20 days during which future linguists should keep a special diary, which records the stages of linguistic research, as well as their own comments (3,000 words). In addition, they are expected to prepare their own projects (6,000 words), which should justify aspects of the experience gained during linguistic research. The success of such projects depends on the selection of bibliography. If necessary, they can contain some elements of empirical research. A precondition for the above-mentioned projects' implementation is students' writing of research proposal (500 words), which must be approved by the module tutor (Bristol University of the West of England, 2017).

Linguistic projects are allocated 30 CATS points (15 ECTS credits), that is 300 hours, including 10 hours for workshops and tutorials and 290 hours for individual work, and are optional.

During tutorials, future linguists are provided with up-to-date information on the recommended list of literary sources, which are directly related to the topic of research. In addition, they can use the university library and some relevant databases (*The Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts*, *MLA Bibliography*, etc.). Recommendations for the effective use of scientific literature are provided in the Module Handbook. In the form of e-mail messages, students receive a list of electronic references, including electronic scientific journals. However, students can also add their own references.

The authors of the article indicate that such multifacetedness within one activity is a significant advantage for future linguists since it helps them to choose the research paradigm, which best suits their scientific interests and reveal their own scientific potential.

As evidenced by some research, British universities actively develop this type of modules. In the School of Oriental and African Studies of University of London, future linguists enroll on *the Extended (5,000 words) Essay module* (152900097), in Years 2 and 3 (15 CATS points – 7.5 ECTS credits) or work on an individual research project in linguistics (10,000 words) in Year 3 (SOAS, University of London, 2017).



The University of Portsmouth introduces linguistic projects in year 1; University of Bedfordshire and Kent University – in Year 2; Anglia Ruskin University, the Manchester Metropolitan University, York St John University, University of Essex and Ulster University – in Year 3.

Therefore, linguistic projects allow future linguists to implement supervised team and individual projects, learn to express their own views in the context of research, generalize and systematize linguistic data, organize academic activities, develop oral and written skills, work with information technology, enhance interpersonal and communication skills, promote initiative, build self-confidence, etc. General characteristics of language projects within the framework of future linguists' research activities in the UK are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

**General characteristics of linguistic projects in the UK**

Criterion	Characteristics
Academic degree	Bachelor's degree
Module type	Compulsory / optional
Study year	1–3
CATS points	15–30 (7.5–15 ECTS credits)
Forms of work	Classroom work (10 %) / individual work (90 %)
Types of work	Writing group or individual reports (3,000–9,000 words), creating presentations (digital or otherwise), organizing conferences, preparing lists of relevant literary sources

*Source: systematized by the authors.*

**Characteristics of bachelor and master dissertations in linguistics.** In British universities, research activities of future linguists also involve writing a dissertation, either at bachelor's or master's levels. It must be noted that bachelor and master dissertations have some common and distinct characteristics described below. Most universities offer a bachelor dissertation as a compulsory module (Bangor University; Birkbeck, University of London; University of Brighton; Lancaster University; University of Leeds). Some universities still view it as an option (Newcastle University; The University of Aberdeen; The University of Essex; York St John University). In the University of York, University of Ulster, University College London (University of London), such a module is unavailable. The number of CATS points ranges from 30 to 40 (15-20 ECTS credits), which is related to educational policies of higher education institutions. However, a master dissertation is always compulsory and corresponds to 60 CATS points (30 ECTS credits).

Some universities require undergraduate students to justify the choice of a bachelor topic and write a research proposal. As for a master dissertation, a research proposal is always compulsory. Its structure for both types of dissertations is similar and should contain the following components: abstract, contents, general characteristics of the research (introduction, goals and objectives of the research), analysis of recent publications, research methodology, completion deadline, conclusions. The number of words varies from 1,500 to 2,000. The topic of the dissertation should be relevant, of scientific and practical value and correspond to scientific interests of candidates. It must be noted that candidates are entitled to choose the topic of the dissertation independently. However, they must first consult with the lecturers of their department, from whom they can choose a scientific supervisor. Scientific interests of candidates and scientific supervisors should coincide



since this is an important condition for a successful defense of the dissertation (Guide to Undergraduate Dissertations, 2017).

J. Biggam (2015) indicates that the level of complexity of bachelor and master dissertations in linguistics depends on the conceptual framework of bachelor's and master's levels of higher education. Thus, the Bachelor of Arts degree involves gaining general knowledge in the chosen field, whereas the Master of Arts degree implies that the candidate has scored at the advanced level of knowledge in this field.

Indeed, a bachelor dissertation confirms future linguists' level of general professional training, their knowledge of professional terminology and concepts and ability to formulate conclusions based on scientific research and the obtained data. A master dissertation confirms their level of general and specialized professional training, as well as knowledge of specialized research tools and the ability to employ them (Candlin, & Plum, 1999; Chiseri-Strater, 1991; Goodfellow, 2005; Kress, 2007).

The structure of bachelor and master dissertations in linguistics is not significantly different and usually consists of the following components: a) title page; b) abstract; c) introduction; d) analysis of recent publications; e) research methodology; e) output data and their analysis; e) discussion; g) conclusions; h) sources used. Some universities require that candidates suggest a potential analysis of research methodology, describe a linguistic corpus and include the prospects for further research on the problem under study. The structure of dissertations with experiment consists of the following components: a) title page; b) introduction; c) research methodology; d) experiment participants; e) experiment conditions; e) procedure; h) findings; g) discussion; c) conclusions; i) appendixes (UKEssays, 2017; The University of Edinburgh, 2017b).

Table 2

**Comparing requirements for bachelor and master dissertations in linguistics in the UK**

Criterion	Bachelor dissertation compulsory / optional	Master dissertation compulsory
Requirements for research proposal	1,500–2,000 words Structure: <i>abstract, contents, general characteristics (introduction, goals and objectives of research), analysis of recent publications, research methodology, completion deadline, conclusions.</i>	
Requirements for research topic	Research topic should be relevant, of scientific and practical value and correspond to scientific interests of candidates	
Requirements for research structure	Research should consist of the following: <i>title page, abstract, introduction, analysis of recent publications, research methodology, output data and their analysis, discussion, conclusions, sources used, appendixes</i> or <i>title page, abstract, introduction, analysis of recent publications, analysis of research methodology, description of linguistic corpus, research methodology / data collection / results / discussion, conclusions / prospects for further research, sources used, appendixes</i> or (for experiment) <i>title page, abstract, introduction, research methodology, experiment participants, experiment conditions, procedure, results, discussion, conclusions, sources used, appendixes</i>	
Words number	7,000–9,000	10,000–20,000
CATS points number	30–40 (15–20 ECTS credits)	60 (30 ECTS credits)

Source: systematized by the authors.



The number of words for bachelor and master dissertations also significantly differs. The minimum number of words for a bachelor dissertation amount to 7,000, whereas the maximum number – 9,000. It must be noted, however, that a master dissertation should contain no less than 10,000 and no more than 20,000 words. British universities normally publish special reference guides, which contain general information about a course in linguistics, modules and tips for dissertation preparation in particular.

The comparison of characteristics of bachelor and master dissertations in linguistics in the context of the UK experience is presented in Table 2.

British universities also involve candidates in departmental research projects. This allows future linguists to work side-by-side with their lecturers, promote their own research portfolios, participate in modern linguistic research and gain the valuable experience they will apply in their professional activities, in particular in the research field. The authors of the article believe that it is also important to establish linguistic circles, which should include meetings with the leading linguists.

***The role of The Linguistics Association of Great Britain in the development of future linguists' research activities.*** The collaboration between British universities and the Linguistics Association of Great Britain (LAGB) is important for research activities of future linguists. Thus, the LAGB invests a part of its profits to support research activities of its own student committee (The LAGB Student Committee). Currently, the committee members are students from the Cambridge, Edinburgh, Sheffield and Surrey Universities. The committee seeks to organize student forum and student scientific conferences on linguistics. The LAGB allocates over £1800 to the organization of conferences, workshops and other academic events. By February 1/ November 1, organizer students must fill out an online application, which should include personal information (name, surname, affiliation, e-mail), as well as the information on the course they study, the study year they are in and the organizing committee. In addition, they must specify both the university and department hosting the event, the name and goals of the conference and the planned budget. The main requirement is a written agreement of the head of the hosting department (LAGB, 2017b). It must be noted that the LAGB also requires that potential participants should be full-time members. Thus, the two-year membership in LAGB for undergraduate students costs £37 with subscription to the Journal of Linguistics and £10 without it. The annual membership in LAGB for postgraduate students costs £28.5 with subscription to the Journal and £15 without it.

The LAGB has also developed a system of bursaries for students who wish to attend the Annual Meeting of the LAGB and present their own researches. They are the following: *Best Student Abstract Bursary*; *Presenter Bursary*; *Attendance Bursary*.

*The Best Student Abstract Bursary* is given to those students whose abstracts received the most positive feedback from the international peer review committee. The bursary includes free registration for the entire conference, conference dinner, reimbursement of accommodation costs (up to £250) and UK-internal travel costs.

Students whose abstracts are chosen for public presentation are awarded *the Presenter Bursary*. The bursary grants the right to free registration for the entire conference, reimbursement of accommodation costs (up to £50) and UK-internal travel costs. Students who do not fall into any of these bursaries receive *the Attendance Bursary*. It includes free registration for the entire conference, reimbursement of UK-internal travel costs (LAGB, 2017b).

The LAGB has launched a series of cash prizes for significant achievements in research activities to undergraduate students. “The Outstanding Undergraduate Dissertation



in Linguistics” prize consists of a £100 cash prize and annual free membership of the LAGB. Such an initiative has attracted many British linguistics students who are willing to act as full-time members of the UK scientific community and further develop their research potential (LAGB, 2017a).

Since 2016, the LAGB has provided official support to the Undergraduate Linguistics Association of Britain (ULAB). Since 2017, the LAGB has rewarded students for the Best Student Presentation at the ULAB. The prize gives the annual free membership in the LAGB, free registration for the Annual Meeting of LAGB, as well as free consultations from the committee members.

Doctoral students can win a cash prize of £500 for the best essay in linguistics. The manuscript must be original. The total number of words cannot exceed 10,000, including tables, diagrams, appendixes, references, etc.

The author of the article believe that such a system of bursaries can really motivate future linguists to engage in various scientific projects in linguistics, develop their research potential and actively expand the scope of linguistics.

## RESULTS

***Providing future linguists with financial and individual incentives with the aim to more involve them in research activities.*** In view of today’s global commercialization of higher education, it is rather timely to provide future linguists with financial and individual incentives in order to enhance the quality of research activities. The developed countries systematically reconsider the mechanisms for developing their research sectors and implement effective grant and scholarship programmes. One should pay particular attention to the UK experience since the Linguistics Association of Great Britain has developed a system of scholarships for bachelor, master and doctoral linguistics students not only for major achievements in the development of linguistics as a science but also for an attempt to expand their own research portfolios through the participation in linguistic conferences, writing of essays on linguistic topics, delivery of speeches in linguistic forums, etc.

Thus, the innovation of the UK experience is rooted in the fact that all their efforts are aimed at cultivating conscious motivation in future linguists to participate in scientific events related to linguistics and its branches. The authors of the article believe that most linguistics students might be interested in such an initiative since it can help them to develop scientific culture of the researcher, become motivated, realize the significance of linguistics, strengthen positions in the scientific community, reveal research potential and improve career perspectives. Therefore, when provided with financial and individual incentives, future linguists will be willing to effectively conduct research activities and improve the theory and practice of linguistics and its branches.

***Diversifying research activities of future linguists.*** The experience of British universities proves the effectiveness of diversifying research activities of future linguists since it allows them to promote their research portfolios, participate in modern linguistic research and gain the valuable experience they need to become in high-quality specialists, in particular in the scientific field. In addition, they can choose the research paradigm, which best suits their scientific needs and interests. This can potentially motivate them to critically analyze their scientific potential. The authors of the article believe that it is vital to implement linguistic research projects in research training of future linguists. Indeed, linguistic projects can help future linguists to implement supervised group and individual projects, learn to express their views in the context of research, generalize and systematize linguistic data, organize academic activities, develop oratory and writing skills, work with



information technologies, enhance interpersonal skills and communication, initiative, self-confidence, etc.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analyzed data, one can determine the following characteristics of future linguists' research activities in British universities: a) diversification of research activities (implementing linguistic projects, writing bachelor / master dissertations, organizing student scientific conferences, compiling research references); b) prevalence of independent work over classroom work (1:2); c) active collaboration of British higher education institutions with the Linguistics Association of Great Britain; d) introduction of financial and individual incentives into research activities; e) involvement of future linguists in departmental research projects in linguistics; f) effective development of future linguists' research portfolio (improving their skills in using information technologies, teamwork skills and organizational skills, etc.).

Therefore, research training of future linguists in British universities proves its correspondence with the current challenges of science commercialization and consideration of significance of future specialists' *research image*. This leads to a thorough analysis on the mechanisms for assuring quality of future linguists' professional education.

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