LABOR et EDUCATIO
nr 5/2017

STUDIA

Natalya Bidyuk

Khmelnytskyi National University, Ukraine

Studying Linguistics at the UK's Universities

Kształcenie zawodowe lingwistów na brytyjskich uczelniach

Introduction

Linguistics as a fundamental cognitive science with an extremely wide range of applications has acquired importance. A global information space, the rapid development of information and communication technologies, intensification of the process of computerization in all areas actualize an increased attention to the quality of professional training of linguists, who not only possess profound theoretical knowledge and practical skills, but, above all, are able to skilfully operate the communicative strategies and tactics, explore the phenomenon of language, efficiently use languages while developing methods of linguistic analysis, lexicographical sources, textbooks, adjust languages to the needs of people with disabilities, standardize and unify scientific and technical terminology, etc. Proficiency in linguistics gives the competitive edge in the global jobs market. In both the private and public sectors there is demand for professionals with strong language skills who can work in culturally diverse environments. The modern linguist must be: a highly skilled manager in

the field of translation services, business and professional communication, able to accomplish his professional functions successfully; an intelligent and competent service-provider; language consultant, who knows well not only foreign and native languages, but also all aspects of life, culture, politics, and mentality of people who speak these languages.

Today, educational programmes do not always meet the demands of the modern work market and its processes. Thus, under modern conditions, educational institutions must teach and motivate students to develop professional competence during their studies and not postpone the development until they have graduated. The survey of practicing linguists about the realities of their job and proper training at the university testifies that almost two thirds of the skills necessary for this profession, they acquire by methods of trial and error after their graduation. This situation has led higher educational institutions to redefine their educational models, modifying teaching methods and improving practical skills. Learning foreign experience provides for new views on organizing study process in linguistics education.

Increasing the number of applicants for Linguistics programmes

The information technology revolution, globalization and internationa-lization of socio-political and socio-economic processes, the increasing role of knowledge integration of science, education and innovation, the need for multilingualism and interculturalism of citizens, global linguistic challenges have led to an increase in the number of applicants for training programmes in linguistics (Benneworth, & de Boer, 2016; Brennan, & Shah, 1994; Brown, & Carasso, 2013; Cunningham, 2014). This can be evidenced by the UK UCAS report, where they have presented the number of undergraduate students enrolled according to a subject and a higher education institution during 2008–2016 (UCAS, n. a.). So, during the 2016 admission campaign 12585 applicants were enrolled, that is 1755 persons (1,62%) more than in 2008. For the third year in a row, there is a slight but gradual increase in the number of applicants, namely, the number of enrolled students increased from 12440 to 12500 during 2014–2015. It should be noted that in 2010 the highest figure for the indicated period was recorded – 12860 persons, which is 2030 persons (1,8%) more than in 2008 and 275 persons (0,18 %) more than in 2016.

During the last nine years, the number of undergraduates who chose Linguistics has also increased. Thus, during the 2016 admission campaign, 585 applicants were enrolled, which is 210 persons more than in 2008. It is worth noting that the number of applicants grew gradually, that is approximately 30–40 persons annually (except in 2011). In 2014, the highest figure for the whole period was recorded – 665 applicants, which is 290 persons more than in 2008 and correspondingly 80 persons more than in 2016. The combination of linguistics or classical philology with other subjects (foreign languages, anthropology, history, etc.) is extremely popular among applicants. Compared with the 2008 and 2009 figures, the 2016 admission campaign is inferior to the number of applicants – 95 and 160 persons respectively. However, during 2010–2016, the number of applicants remains almost unchanged (±21 persons). The lowest rates are characteristic for those subjects, which are indirectly related to linguistics and classical philology – during 2008–2014, the number of applicants is on average 95 persons. However, the 2014 and 2015 admission campaigns indicate an apparent increase – 170 and 175 persons respectively.

Fig. 1. The Allocation of the Number of Applicants Enrolled in Linguistics, Classics and Related during 2008–2016
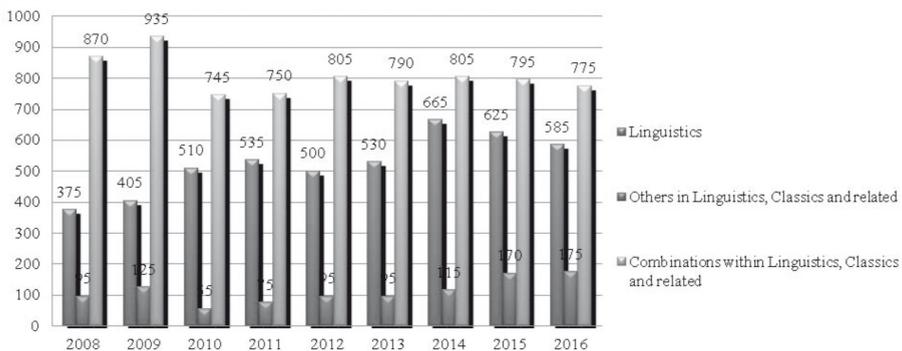
The organizational principles of linguists' professional training

UK universities offer a wide range of language subjects and combinations, the opportunity to study or work overseas, alongside a thriving research culture. They emphasize a student-centred, research-informed approaches to learning. The Linguistics programmes, are taught by experienced academics, award-winning educators and established or emergent world-class researchers,

who are recognized for their excellent standards of both teaching and pastoral care. The University of Reading was among the first universities in the UK to offer programmes in Linguistics, Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching. Over the past 50 years, the university has been home to many of the world's most distinguished scholars in language studies, and has produced graduates whose work has come to define the field.

According to UNISTATS (2017) and Postgraduate Search (2017), British official websites that provide detailed information on undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral curricula, 43 universities implement undergraduate programmes in linguistics – 417 offers. At the same time, 59 universities offer postgraduate and doctoral (taught and research) programmes in linguistics – 187 offers.

Consequently, we can conclude that such a great number of higher education institutions offering curricula in linguistics for all cycles of higher education prove 1) significant interest of potential students in linguistics as a science and their choice to build a career in this field; 2) the need for modern specialists capable of expanding the potential of linguistics and using its assets in various fields for development of a global society. In addition, the vast majority of universities is located in England – 51 universities (83,6%), while 5 (8,2%) are located in Scotland, 3 (5%) in Wales and 2 (3,2%) in Northern Ireland.

The aim of modern tertiary education in Great Britain is to provide inter-related interdisciplinary professional training. Thus, the characteristic features of the organization of linguists' professional training at UK universities is a flexible system that provides students with freedom of choice from a vast range of courses; differentiation of the study content (availability of curricula for 2 levels of complexity); promotion of students' independence in search for their own educational trajectory; development of their academic mobility and maturity; provision of the necessary experience for further professional activity; the possibility of successive and parallel mastering of several degree programmes; training orientation toward research activities; application of traditional and innovative forms of training organization, etc. (Warner, & Palfreyman, 2001).

As evidenced by the studies performed, professional training of linguists at UK universities is mainly oriented toward humanities. Thus, at the first cycle of higher education, Bachelor of Arts curricula prevail. Some universities, such as University College London, University of Reading, University of Ulster, University of Edinburgh, University of Sunderland, simultaneously

offer Bachelor of Science curricula, which, in turn, are mostly based on mathematical and natural sciences.

Postgraduate education in Linguistics offers a wide range of qualifications. So, most universities offer Master of Arts curricula. However, there are a number of universities that also implement Master of Science curricula, namely, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Aston University, University College London (University of London); Master of Philosophy – University of Cambridge, Swansea University, Sussex University, Canterbury Christ Church University; Master of Letters – University of Stirling; Doctor of Philosophy – Birkbeck (University of London), University of Greenwich, Queen Mary University of London and others.

Linguistics curricula for the first (Bachelor) cycle of higher education, as a rule, last three years (full-time mode of study). In some cases, curricula are designed for four years and include one year of study abroad and / or foreign language studies (The University of York, Lancaster University). Part-time studies can last four (University of Brighton, Birkbeck (University of London)), five (University of Westminster), six (University of Wolverhampton, University of the West of England Bristol (UWE)) years. It must be noted that Quality Assurance Agency has developed Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics (2007; 2015) (for bachelor's degrees with honours). It defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they should know, do and understand at the end of their studies. Programmes of study which use this Subject Benchmark Statement as a reference point are generally classified under the following codes in the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS): Q100 to Q190.

Subject Benchmark Statements form part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) which sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education reviewed by QAA are required to meet. They are a component of Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, which includes the Expectation that higher education providers consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements in order to secure threshold academic standards (Quality Assurance Agency, 2014). Subject Benchmark Statements are written and maintained by subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The process is facilitated by QAA. In order to ensure the continuing currency of Subject Benchmark Statements, QAA initiates regular reviews of their content, five years after first

publication, and every seven years subsequently. The Quality Code aligns with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

It is vital to mention that Subject Benchmark Statements are used as reference points in the design, delivery and review of academic programmes. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not intended to represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design within a framework agreed by the subject community.

Master's degree programmes in Linguistics at UK universities are designed for one year for full-time mode of study, when for part-time mode of study preferably two years, seldom three years – (Faculty of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS, University of London), Bangor University), five years (York St. John University). Doctoral programmes in linguistics usually last three up to six years (University of Birmingham, University of Brighton, University of Essex, University of Leeds, Anglia Ruskin University, etc.).

Scottish universities deserve special attention (Aberdeen University, Glasgow University, Dundee University, University of Edinburgh, University of Stirling). It must be noted that in Scotland, most curricula at the first cycle of higher education are called master's programmes and are traditionally designed for four years, unlike in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is the so-called "gold standard" of tertiary education, which is widely common in European countries and the USA (Study in Scotland, n. a.). However, they are not equivalent to the second (master's) cycle of higher education. Simultaneously, curricula in linguistics at the first cycle of higher education in the aforementioned universities provide obtaining Master of Arts qualification and at the second cycle of higher education – Master of Sciences.

The autonomy of universities provides the diversification of master's programmes and degrees. For example, master's degrees are divided into taught and research according to the correlation of structured learning and independent study, professional and practice according to the predominance of training regulations, namely work-based learning or practice-related learning. The key features are training terms, strategic aims, content, structure, methods and forms of teaching, diagnostic means, interconnection between further

professional development and career. The most common are three types of master's degrees. They are research, specialized / advanced, professional / practice. The aim of the research degree is the preparation of researchers who are able to conduct original research during independent study, gain experience of research organization and realization, preparation for research doctorate programmes or research activities in further career.

The British science and pedagogy community is convinced that research activity is an important aspect of the formation of future researchers for it serves as a powerful tool of staff selection for highly qualified specialists training, preservation and renovation of scientific schools potential. Research activity is considered by scientists as an organized subsystem of master's training system, which provides creative intellectual activity aimed at studying a particular object (phenomenon, process) in order to gain objectively new knowledge and its further use in practice.

Linguists′ professional competence

It must be noted that after graduation future specialists in Linguistics are in demand in a wide variety of industries. First of all, these are the industries that are directly related to professional use of linguistics, among which speech and language therapy, teaching, information technology, interpreting and translation, publishing, public relations, research, lexicography. In addition, graduates can hold positions in such areas as advertising, journalism and forensics.

In response to the need of producing qualified professionals able to face current work demands, the education based on competencies seems to be the right choice. Education by competencies was and continues to be the answer, which is an integrated approach to education, as it connects the work field and society at large with higher education and particularly to student professional development. That is why it is advisable to apply competence approach in the future linguists' training, that is not only relevant in current situation, but also can be used successfully as a methodological framework for solution of pedagogical and didactic issues related to the training of specialists in Linguistics at UK universities. Students should clearly imagine the structure of professional competence and its basic elements that are necessary for their successful performing.

As a result of the studying curricula in Linguistics at UK universities, we have concluded that professional competence of linguists includes a range of competencies and sub-competencies among which are the following: linguistic, sociocultural, informational and technological, operational, strategic, psychophysiological, intellectual, pragmatic, textual, semantic, transfer, instrumental, thematic, projective and translation. Understanding the language as the main instrument of linguist's professional competence includes communicative competencies as basic ones. Linguistic, social, cultural, and pragmatic components form a core of communicative competencies. Accordingly, the content of the linguistic component includes the following: knowledge of phonological, lexical, grammatical rules and norms of the studied language as a system; knowledge of literary language norms; knowledge and skills of the usage of different types of discourse; the ability to perform linguistic analysis of literary, scientific, scientifically popular, newspapers and journalistic, official and business texts. The sociocultural component requires knowledge of national and cultural peculiarities of verbal and non-verbal behaviour and the ability to apply this knowledge in the process of communication. The pragmatic component implies the availability of the knowledge and skills, related to the identification of pragmatic parameters of utterance and language organization of functional and stylistic text varieties. Communicative competencies include grammatical competency (words and rules); sociolinguistic competency (appropriateness); strategic competency (use of communication strategies); discourse competency (cohesion and coherence).

To sum up, we can conclude that linguists' professional competence is a multicomponent structure that includes a number of *sub-competencies*, which are professionally important and crucial. They are: *bilingual* (predominantly procedural knowledge needed to communicate in two languages); *extra-linguistic* (includes bicultural, encyclopaedic and subject knowledge); *instrumental* (procedural knowledge related to the use of documentation sources and information and communication technologies: dictionaries, encyclopaedias, grammars, style books, parallel texts, electronic, corpora, searcher); *strategic* (procedural knowledge to guarantee the linguistic efficiency and solve the problems encountered); *psychophysiological* (includes cognitive components (memory, perception, attention and emotion), attitudinal aspects (intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigour, critical spirit), abilities such as creativity, logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis, etc.); *translation sub-*

competence (predominantly declarative knowledge, both implicit and explicit, about translation as an aspect of profession).

At UK universities there are many very interesting and innovative courses that are unique and leading to form the competences mentioned above. The teaching quality is extremely impressive, and the courses allow all students to achieve their potential. Challenging combination of theory and practice is designed to stimulate critical thinking skills, foster originality, and enable student to become a uniquely skilled analytical thinker and problem-solver. Courses of study offer paralleled coverage of the field of linguistics ("English Language and Linguistics", "Linguistics with French", "Philosophy and Linguistics"). Modules are taught by world-leading academics in the core areas of syntax, phonetics and phonology, semantics, and sociolinguistics and in sub-fields including forensic phonetics, historical linguistics, child language, second language acquisition, and morphology. Students engage with linguistics both at the conceptual level and the detailed level of raw linguistic data.

Modules typically have more interactive classroom activities, such as group presentations or practical sessions, in addition to lectures. Weekly seminars for each module provide a forum for discussion of core knowledge and its application beyond the specific classroom topic. Advance preparation for seminar discussion is essential, and may include library-based research. Most teaching takes place in smaller groups. The key content of some modules revolves around substantial reading lists of primary research papers that will challenge and stimulate. Other modules are lab-based, involving phonetic or grammatical analysis of corpora. Students may take a primary role in presenting the lecture content through reports on a topic researched in advance. Students write a dissertation and receive individual supervision on their dissertation project. All the modules have associated *Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)* sites where all crucial materials - reading lists, handouts, discussion boards - are always accessible via the Internet. Some modules have *lab-based seminars* for developing skills in various kinds of linguistic analysis software, or for accessing electronic corprora of linguistic data.

Conclusions

So, we have presented a general overview of studying linguistics at UK universities. It has been indicated that regardless of many comparative researches on professional training of various specialists in leading countries

of the world and, in particular in Great Britain, the problem has not been properly revealed in scientific literature yet. Based on the data accumulated by UCAS it has been calculated that recent trends in university admission campaigns during 2008-2016 prove a gradual but stable increase in the number of applicants wishing to pursue a career in Linguistics. In addition, we have presented the concepts of bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees according to the descriptors of the Frameworks of Higher Education Qualifications of the UK Degree-Awarding Bodies. In order to comprehend the scope of Linguistics dissemination at higher education institutions in Great Britain, we have analysed the country-based allocation of British higher education institutions offering curricula in Linguistics. The characteristic features of the organization of linguists' professional training have been outlined. It has been indicated that professional training of linguists at UK universities is mainly oriented toward humanities; undergraduate and postgraduate education in Linguistics offer a wide range of qualifications. It has been mentioned that Quality Assurance Agency has developed Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics (for bachelor's degrees with honours), where one can find what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they should know, do and understand at the end of their studies. It has been noted that after graduation future specialists in linguistics are in demand in a wide variety of industries. Having studied different models of linguist's competence, its structure consists of a number of sub-competencies, for example: communicative competencies, instrumental competency, psychophysiological competency, and strategic competency. All of the mentioned definitions and structures of professional competence of a linguist should, of course, be regularly revised due to the changing conditions and demands of modern life and the job market.

Based on the above, we can conclude that significance of linguistics as a science is considerably enhancing due to the annual increase in the number of applicants wishing to study Linguistics in higher education institutions. In addition, British curricula provide for interdisciplinarity, regional diversity, flexibility in choosing learning forms, as well as good career prospects.

Streszczenie: W artykule omówiono problem profesjonalnego wyszkolenia lingwistów na brytyjskich uczelniach. Na podstawie danych zgromadzonych przez UCAS obliczono, że ostatnie tendencje na uniwersyteckich kampaniach wstępnych w latach

2008–2016 świadczą o stopniowym, ale stabilnym wzroście liczby kandydatów pragnących kontynuować karierę w dziedzinie językoznawstwa. Przedstawiono charakterystyczne cechy organizacji szkoleń zawodowych lingwistów. Wskazano, że kształcenie zawodowe lingwistów na brytyjskich uczelniach jest głównie ukierunkowane na nauki humanistyczne; studia licencjackie i podyplomowe z językoznawstwa oferują szeroki wachlarz kwalifikacji. Wspomniano, że Agencja ds. Zapewnienia Jakości opracowała deklarację *Subject Benchmark Statement* w dziedzinie językoznawstwa (na stopniach licencjata z wyróżnieniem), gdzie można odnaleźć, jakie oczekiwania powinni spełniać absolwencji w zakresie wiedzy, umiejętności i rozumienia na koniec studiów. Zauważono, że po ukończeniu studiów specjaliści z zakresu językoznawstwa są poszukiwani w wielu różnych gałęziach przemysłu.

Słowa kluczowe: językoznawstwo, kształcenie zawodowe, Wielka Brytania, program nauczania, edukacja

Abstract. The article deals with the problem of professional training of linguists at the UK's universities. Based on the data accumulated by UCAS it has been calculated that recent trends in university admission campaigns during 2008-2016 prove gradual but stable increase in the number of applicants wishing to pursue career in Linguistics. The characteristic features of the organization of linguists' professional training have been outlined. It has been indicated that professional training of linguists at the UK's universities is mainly oriented toward humanities; undergraduate and postgraduate education in Linguistics offers a wide range of qualifications. It has been mentioned that Quality Assurance Agency has developed Subject Benchmark Statement for Linguistics (for bachelor's degrees with honours), where one can find what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. It has been noted that after graduation future specialists in linguistics are in demand in a wide variety of industries.

Keywords: linguistics, professional training, Great Britain, syllabus, education

References

Benneworth, P. S., & de Boer, H. F. (2016). *United Kingdom, higher education mergers in Wales: One of twelve case studies produced as part of the project on structural reform in higher education*. Publications Office of the European Union. doi: 10.2766/843420.

Brennan J., & Shah, T. (1994). Higher Education policy in the United Kingdom. In F. Kaiser, P. Maassen, L. Meek, F. van Vught, E. de Weert, & L. Goedegebuure (Eds), *Higher education policy: an international comparative perspective* (pp. 290–314). Oxford; New York, Seoul, Tokyo: Pergamon Press. doi:10.1016/B978-0-08-042393-7.50002-X.

Brown, R., & Carasso, H. (2013). *Everything for sale? The Marketization of UK higher education*. London: Routlege.

Cunningham, B. (2014). *Professional life in modern British higher education*. London: Institute of Education Press (IOE Press).

Hudson, R. (2004). Why education needs linguistics (and vice versa). *Journal of Linguistics*, 40 (1), 105–130. doi:10.1017/S0022226703002342

Postgraduate Search. (2017). *Linguistics*. Retrieved from https://www.postgraduatesearch.com/pgs/search?course=linguistics.

Quality Assurance Agency. (2007). *Subject benchmark statement for Linguistics*. Retrieved from http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Subject-benchmark-statement-Linguistics.pdf.

Quality Assurance Agency. (2015). *Subject benchmark statement: Linguistics*. Retrieved from http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Linguistics-15.pdf.

Quality Assurance Agency. (2014). *UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards. The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies*. Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency.

UCAS. (n.d.). *Undergraduate releases*. Retrieved from https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resource-1.

UNISTATS. (2017). *Results for Linguistics*. Retrieved from https://unistats.ac.uk/searchresults/.

Study in Scotland. (n.a.) *Scotland's universities* Retrieved from http://www.studyinscotland.org/scotlands-universities/.

Warner, D. & Palfreyman, D. (2001). *The state of UK higher education*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.