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PECULIARITIES OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITIES OF THE USA

ABSTRACT

The article is dedicated to the study of BA, MA and PhD programs in Applied Linguistics at the universities of the USA. Special attention has been paid to Georgetown University where professional training of future specialists in Applied Linguistics has its specific features and experience that can be studied and borrowed into educational systems of developing countries. Special feature of Applied Linguistics study at the university is the ability of students to complete an accelerated Master's degree program, write a Senior Honor Thesis and participate in inter-disciplinary research in cognitive science, which allows students to combine the study of language with broader study of human mind.

The curriculum of Bachelor's degree program has been analyzed and academic disciplines constituting it have been defined. Requirements to students' knowledge, abilities and skills have been characterized. It is a notable fact that in American universities and in Georgetown in particular it is a privilege for students to write an Honors Thesis. Only a limited number of students in Applied Linguistics can be bestowed an honor to write it in their senior year of Bachelor's study. The procedure of writing the Thesis and its presentation have been thoroughly described.

Accelerated Master's degree program that allows students to complete Bachelor's degree training and start Master's degree training simultaneously has been analyzed.

Traditional Master's degree program in Language and Communication – a two-year professional program that is based on Applied Sociolinguistics and provides training to students necessary to become professionals capable of using linguistic skills in business, government, non-profitable, technical and educational branches has been presented and its curriculum analyzed. Compulsory and elective academic disciplines have been characterized.

It has been defined that after obtaining Master's degree, students can submit application for PhD degree program in one of the following branches: Applied Linguistics, Computational Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Theoretical Linguistics, and General Linguistics.

Keywords: *Applied Linguistics, Bachelor's degree program, Master's degree program, thesis, professional training, accelerated Master's degree program, research, and sociolinguistics.*

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПІДГОТОВКИ ФАХІВЦІВ З ПРИКЛАДНОЇ ЛІНГВІСТИКИ В УНІВЕРСИТЕТАХ США

АНОТАЦІЯ

Стаття присвячена вивченню програм прикладної лінгвістики освітніх рівнів «бакалавр» та «магістр» в університетах США. Особливу увагу приділено



Джорджтаунському університету, де професійна підготовка майбутніх фахівців прикладної лінгвістики має свої особливості, які варто вивчати, та досвід, який слід запозичувати в освітні системи країн, що розвиваються. Особливістю програм прикладної лінгвістики в університеті є можливість студентів завершити прискорену магістерську підготовку, написати «почесну» бакалаврську дипломну роботу та взяти участь у міждисциплінарних дослідженнях у галузі когнітивної науки, що дозволяє студентам поєднувати вивчення мови з більш широким вивченням можливостей людського розуму.

Проаналізовано навчальний план освітньої програми підготовки бакалаврів з «Прикладної лінгвістики» та визначено її компоненти (навчальні дисципліни). Охарактеризовано вимоги до знань, умінь і навичок студентів.

Особливістю бакалаврської програми підготовки в Джорджтаунському університеті є привілей обраних студентів написати «почесну» дипломну роботу. Докладно описано процедуру написання такої дипломної роботи та її презентації.

Проаналізовано навчання за прискореною магістерською програмою, яка дозволяє студентам завершити навчання за ступенем бакалавра та розпочати навчання за ступенем магістра одночасно. Також описано особливості реалізації традиційної магістерської програми з «Мови та комунікації» – дворічної програми професійної підготовки, яка базується на прикладній соціолінгвістиці та забезпечує підготовку студентів, здатних використовувати лінгвістичні навички в бізнесі, урядовій, неприбутковій громадській діяльності, технічній та освітній галузях. У статті детально описано та проаналізовано навчальний план цієї освітньої програми, охарактеризовано обов'язкові та вибіркові навчальні дисципліни.

З'ясовано, що після отримання ступеня магістра студенти можуть подати заявку на програму підготовки доктора філософії в одній із галузей: прикладна лінгвістика, комп'ютерна лінгвістика, соціолінгвістика, теоретична лінгвістика, загальна лінгвістика.

Ключові слова: *прикладна лінгвістика, бакалаврська програма, магістерська програма, дипломна робота, професійна підготовка, прискорена магістерська програма, дослідження, соціолінгвістика.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prestigious specialties for students who want to combine their future profession with intercultural communication and information society is Applied Linguistics. Students who acquire degree in this profession obtain special knowledge and skills and are capable of performing professional activities in educational, translation, information, organizational and management branches. Professionals can also adapt to related areas of professional activity such as research, marketing, information technologies and analytics.

In spite of the fact that the main aspect of applied linguistics is practical application of linguistic data, yet every practical action should be based on clear scientifically grounded theoretical foundations. Therefore, applied linguistics should logically develop not only as educational specialty, but also as a scientific one (Wingfield & Connell, 2022).

Considering the fact that in developing countries not so many educational institutions provide professional training of Applied Linguistics specialists and those that do must constantly keep in touch with the groundbreaking international experience, the



issue of studying foreign experience and introducing it into educational systems of developing countries is up-to-date and urgent. It is necessary to systematize the methodology of teaching Applied Linguistics in higher educational institutions of the leading countries, revise and improve the curricula of the faculties, define the science (narrow specialization) that can be applied to linguistics, create new information and analytical centers whose specialists would be engaged in the development of linguistic support for certain industries (Andringa & Godfroid, 2020). All these steps will make it possible to provide more effective transition of developing countries to the level of information society.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the article is to analyze the groundbreaking experience of American universities, namely Georgetown University, in order to optimize and improve Applied Linguistics training programs at the universities of developing countries to make them competitive at the labor market.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

General theoretical issues of applied linguistics have been studied by a number of domestic and foreign scientists: A. Baranov, N. Bardina, V.Korniyenko, S. Andringa, L. Connell, S. Eames, Ch. Ferguson, J. Fishman, A. Godfroid, J. Greenberg, M. Holliday, D. Hymes, M. Petray, H. Widdowson, C. Wingfield, L. Milroy and others.

However, optimization of the professional training of Applied Linguistics specialists requires a thorough analysis of practical implementation of successful training programs at the leading universities (normative documents, curricula, syllabi etc.). For our study, we concentrated our attention on the USA as one of the leading countries in providing qualitative training of future applied linguists. In the process of research, we conducted thorough analysis of BA and MA programs in Applied Linguistics at the universities of Ohio, Brock, Portland and Georgetown (Applied Linguistics. Brock University, 2022; M.A. in Applied Linguistics, 2022; Undergraduate programs. Portland State University, 2022). They are similar in general with some differences in curricula and organization. We decided to focus on Georgetown University that has some peculiarities that are worth studying and adapting for developing countries. Special feature of Applied Linguistics training at the university is the ability of students to complete an accelerated Master's degree program, write a Senior Honor Thesis and participate in inter-disciplinary research in cognitive science, which allows students to combine the study of language with broader study of human mind (Wingfield & Connell, 2022). Courses offered satisfy students' demand for general and professional development.

While conducting the research a range of general scientific methods such as study, analysis and synthesis of reference, scientific educational resources, as well as systematization and generalization, have been applied. The research is qualitative (descriptive) and includes observation and narrative inquiry.

RESULTS

Linguistic Department of Georgetown University offers BA, MA and PhD programs in Applied Linguistics. To enter the BA program students have to meet the requirements to the degree which are presented in an annual College Bulletin. According to the information presented in College Bulletin (2022), applicants must have general understanding of linguistics as a science studying language and a range of academic subjects related to the language: Phonetics, Grammar, and Language History. Professional training of future applied linguists at the university also presupposes studying aspects common to all the languages. Among them are the role of a language in society, in large groups, nations and



interpersonal communication; the ways a language is learned by adults and children; how the language is processed by the brain; the use of linguistic knowledge in language teaching, computer science and other branches. Linguistics is an interdisciplinary study related to cognitive science, computing, philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology (Petray et al., 2021).

Students studying at the Bachelor's degree program must complete the following courses:

- Level 1: Introduction to Language
- Level 2: 4 general courses which provide the overview of linguistic theory and methods: Language Sounds; Grammar Analysis; Language Study; Language and Society
- Level 3: 2 specialized courses aimed at developing profound understanding of linguistics and possibilities of research in one or more linguistic branches.

Besides, students choose three elective linguistic disciplines, which are offered each semester and can be chosen with the help of the faculty counselor.

In addition to these requirements, students of BA program in Applied Linguistics must obtain 12 credits for Ancient or Contemporary Language study.

Bachelor's degree program in Applied Linguistics sets a number of requirements to what students must know:

- approaches to language analysis;
- types and variations of languages and erroneous stereotypes about them;
- complexity and basic systematization of languages;
- the role of language diversity (within the same and different languages) in linguistic theory and practice;
- connection between the language and different social contexts;
- peculiarities of a native and foreign language study;
- the structure of the languages and their social meaning;
- computational and cognitive processing of a language.

Bachelor's degree program in Applied Linguistics sets a number of requirements to what students must be able to do:

- to analyze linguistic data;
- to analyze, critically evaluate and integrate traditional and contemporary research in linguistics and apply it to modern theoretical and practical issues;
- to compile coherent and clear linguistic analytical data;
- to elaborate, conduct and report on original research projects on urgent and up-to-date linguistic issues;
- to combine linguistic data with other scientific and educational branches (Undergraduate Program. Georgetown University, 2022).

It is a notable fact but in American universities and in Georgetown in particular it is a privilege to students to write an Honors Thesis. Only a limited number of Bachelor's degree students in Applied Linguistics can be bestowed an honor to write it in their senior year of study. The choice of such students is made on the basis of the final academic score for the spring semester of their junior year of study. Students interested in writing a thesis have to apply for it preliminarily. If their application is approved, they are invited to the Honors Thesis Seminar, after which they start the process of writing their research and presenting it. They undergo a special course aimed at ensuring additional support in writing the paper. Students are assigned a mentor responsible for checking the content of the



research and assessing the final version of the work. Other teaching staff and peers also help with the research, providing feedback concerning the work and the process of its writing, assist with the organization of the research and its structuring, and help to correct and avoid mistakes, assist with coherent presentation of the work, controlling the adherence to the schedule. At each stage of the work writing, the progress and the problems are discussed, resources (printed and online), peer reviews, discussions and considerations of previous works at the seminars are provided. Seminars take place once in two weeks. Bachelor degree students get 3 credits for this course. While undergoing the course students who write the paper have access to research papers of the previous years of the similar themes. Students are supposed to read them and come to the next seminar ready to discuss some definite parts of these works weekly. Students are not assessed on the grounds of the final content of the research paper – at the end of the semester the mentor decides whether the work corresponds to the requirements to such research papers. At the end of the course, the students get a grade on the grounds of their participation in the seminars, ability to give and receive constructive feedback, to work within the schedule and present their work properly (Undergraduate Program. Georgetown University, 2022).

The grade (100 %) for the Thesis is a cumulative of the following components:

1. Attending and participating in the discussion of the group (20 %). Students have to come to the seminar ready with what they were supposed to read and discuss during the seminar.

2. Preparation course (10 %).

Topics that are covered by the course are:

- research planning;
- becoming a researcher;
- choosing the theme for the research;
- formulation of the theme;
- study of scientific literature;
- ethics of research;
- arguments and evidence;
- hypothesis formulation, its checking and proving;
- strategies for data analysis;
- reporting on the results of the research;
- creating informational tables, graphs and diagrams;
- making conclusions;
- writing a summary;
- giving and receiving constructive feedback;
- effective presentation.

3. Submitting the drafts timely (30 %).

4. Peer reviews (20 %) – timely and constructive comments on the works of other students.

5. Final presentation (20 %) – 20-minute presentation with invited mentors, peers etc.

One more specific feature of studying at Applied Linguistics at Georgetown University is the possibility to complete an accelerated Master's degree program that allows students to complete Bachelor's degree training and start Master's degree training simultaneously. Students apply for this program of study in autumn of their last year of Bachelor's study and the decision about their acceptance is made in spring. It should be mentioned that some courses in Linguistics, which students study during this time, are counted for their Bachelor's degree and some – for Master's degree. Such courses are called double-counted. Students meeting all the requirements to the degree obtain it automatically without taking the final leaving exam.

Besides this accelerated Master's degree program, there is also a traditional Master's degree program in Language and Communication – a two-year professional program that is based on Applied Sociolinguistics. It provides students' training necessary



to become professionals capable of using linguistic skills in business, government, non-profitable, technical and educational branches. The program is focused on application of linguistic theory, research and methods in a wide range of career possibilities that are accompanied by intensive professional development. Every student has an opportunity to adjust the program to their academic and professional interests and goals. The program allows students to work part-time and easily combine it with studying. The program covers the following aspects of linguistics:

- artificial intelligence;
- business and consulting;
- leadership and advocacy;
- applied research;
- international governing;
- social communication;
- voice and speech technologies;
- conservation policy;
- user experience research and design;
- marketing and branding.

Students can choose between two programs of study:

- 30-credit study (10 courses);
- 24-credit study (8 courses) and a Master's Thesis (6 credits).

Compulsory courses for the Program include:

1. General linguistic disciplines: students who do not have substantial preliminary training in linguistics have to focus on one of such disciplines during the first year of study. Besides, it is better to make the choice not by oneself but in cooperation with a consultant. This is not required of the students who have Bachelor's degree in Linguistics but is desirable as well. General linguistic disciplines include Phonetics, Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics, and Phonology (Master's Degree Programs. Georgetown University, 2022).

2. Professionalization Seminar – a unique professional course aimed at demonstrating how linguistics can be used in professional context. Overall, students at Georgetown University are obliged to take part in professional development events during the year and this professional development event is designed for graduates of MA program in Linguistics to demonstrate how and where they can apply skills and training obtained at the university, branches in which these skills are the most required and valued. The course is aimed at increasing motivation of students and revealing the values and privileges of their profession. The lessons are structured as a dynamic combination of lectures, discussions and interactive tasks. Students develop their vision of how to use sociolinguistics professionally through lectures and presentations of the invited lecturers who have experience of combining theory and practice of sociolinguistics. Students choose the branch of their professional interest on which they concentrate during the course, considering and practically applying their training in the chosen branch of science. Students create their professional portfolio (resume, application letter, online portfolio etc.) which in future can be used while searching for a job (Eames, 2022). Students communicate among themselves during professional events, attend Career Fairs, interview each other (simulating job interviews) to practice their skills of combining professional training with their interests and values in a chosen place of work (Andringa & Godfroid, 2020).

3. Three basic courses that form fundamental methodological, theoretical and analytical competences in Sociolinguistics. The most popular here are the following disciplines of the curriculum: Discourse Analysis, Intercultural Communication, Sociolinguistic Methods, and Sociolinguistic Variations (Applied Linguistics. Georgetown University, 2022).

Other courses of the Program are elective and cover different branches of Linguistics: theoretical, applied, computational and sociolinguistic. Choosing them,



students have an opportunity to deepen their knowledge in a definite branch of linguistics (e.g. discourse analysis), obtain additional specialization (e.g. Computational Linguistics) or get the general view of the profession. The most popular elective courses are:

- Forensic Linguistics; – Task-Based Language Teaching;
- Discourse of Social Media; – Second Language Acquisition and Bilingualism;
- Institutional Discourse; – Natural Language Processing;
- Language Data Analysis; – Communication, Culture and Study Abroad.
- Language Policy;

As in the case with general linguistic disciplines, it is advisable to select elective courses together with the faculty consultant.

What concerns Master's degree thesis, students have to apply for its writing and the application must be approved. The application is to be submitted until the end of the first year of studying. If it is approved, students give their suggestions as to the theme and the plan of writing to the mentor. The work is read and revised by the faculty counselor.

After obtaining Master's degree, students can submit application for PhD program in one of the following branches: Applied Linguistics, Computational Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Theoretical Linguistics, and General Linguistics.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Thus, in the result of thorough study of BA, MA and PhD programs in Applied Linguistics in American Universities, namely in Georgetown University, we can make a conclusion about availability of groundbreaking ideas concerning their implementation that are unique and useful for universities of developing countries and can easily be transferred into their educational systems. Among the most notable are the ability of students to complete an accelerated Master's degree training, write a Senior Honor Thesis and participate in inter-disciplinary research in cognitive science. Special attention should be paid to compulsory and elective academic disciplines in the curriculum and possibilities for practical application of the obtained skills and abilities.

The prospect of further research is the realization of PhD program at the university, its peculiar features, curriculum, syllabi and practical implementation of students' acquired knowledge and skills in the applied branch of science and workplace.

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