

Research and Design seminar “Linguistic projects”

1. Course Description

1.1. Title of a Course

Research and Design seminar “Linguistic projects” is a course for 1st-year and 2nd-year students of the Master’s programme “Linguistic Theory and Language Description” of the National Research University Higher School of Economics.

1.2. Pre-requisites

There are no pre-requisites other than preparatory reading suggested by the guest lecturer; all background information is introduced in lectures.

1.3. Course Type (compulsory, elective, optional)

The course is compulsory for the students of the MA program Linguistic theory and language description (NRU HSE).

1.4. Abstract

The aim of the course is to introduce the students to the state of the art linguistic knowledge on different topics in theoretical linguistics, as well as to present an overview of the existing fieldwork methodologies and to broaden the students’ outlook on various issues in theoretical linguistics through carrying out their own research and through involvement in discussions of others’ research projects. The main idea of the course is a focus on methods of linguistic studies in various domains.

2. Learning Objectives

The **objectives** of the course is to introduce the students to the methods of and issues in modern linguistic research.

3. Learning Outcomes

Intended outcomes include, for the students:

- understanding principles of approach to language studies in the domains determined by the selected fields
- acquiring skills in linguistic data collection, analysis and interpretation
- training skills of critical academic reading and communication
- experience of 'real life' research, including problem setting, conformity to deadlines
training skills of academic presentation and co-operation

4. Course Plan

Classes in field linguistics

The module comprises several lectures on various methodologies of (lexical) data collection with a specific focus on different elicitation techniques, different types of linguistic databases (such as CLICS or the World Loanword Database) and previous research in lexical typology. Seminars are devoted to practical tasks, including elicitation sessions, literature discussions, and students' presentations of their work on the research projects.

The data collected during the course is supposed to be introduced into the CLICS database.

Master-classes

The module comprises several parts - topics selected for the specific year, from two to four. As an example, the topics for 2017-2018 are provided:

Formal approaches to anaphora: a study of issues in co-valuation and binding, including diversity in patterns of reflexivity. Cross-linguistic variation in local vs. non-local binding provides many issues are often used within functional paradigm as arguments against generative approach to syntax. These lectures will explain how these problems may be approached by extending and modifying rather than abandoning canonical binding theory. The lectures put additional emphasis on the division of labor between syntax and pragmatics.

Typology of semantic shifts: canonical comparative method emphasizes the strictness of phonetic laws and resulting sound correspondences between related languages, but is less keen on the laws of semantic change. However, semantic evolution is of no less importance to the validification of the results of linguistic reconstruction than is phonetic change. Implausible semantic change endangers reconstruction to the same extent as inaccurate phonetic calculation. In these lectures, we discuss modern advances in the study of typology of semantic shifts in the history of human languages as well as methods that can be used in their study.

The notion of Sprachbund: examples and issues in methodology. The notion of Sprachbund is one of the oldest in sociolinguistics. However, the study of Sprachbund's is far from being a

methodologically elaborated domain. Sprachbund has to be distinguished from a more general notion of linguistic area, on the one hand, and from much more specific idea of contact between individual languages. The difference is that of granularity, but the availability of means of mutual delimitation of these notions, and the very necessity of such delimitation, may be questioned. Further, the notion of Sprachbund is inherently fuzzy, because it deals with bundles of linguistic features that wane from the nucleus towards the periphery. This fuzziness, which is the essence of the areal nature of Sprachbund and could be attributed to historical diffusion of features, constitutes a methodological problem in itself.

Research project

Each meeting includes presentations of project progress report since the time the project was last discussed. The audience includes MA students, project supervisors, seminar supervisors and, when possible, other experienced researchers as invited experts. The discussion is interactive, with 'online' interventions from other students, invited experts and others. When possible, the presentations include more active involvement of the audience, suggesting them to carry out a sample research task related to one of the research activities planned as part of the project (typological annotation of a grammar; analysis of a text sample etc.) so that to increase the audience's involvement into discussion.

5. Reading List

5.1. Required

The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Fieldwork.

By: Nicholas Thieberger. *Oxford University Press*. ISBN: 978-0-19-957188-8, 978-0-19-163281-5, 978-0-19-174411-2. – ЭБС: Oxford Handbook Foundation Collection 2012.

5.2. Optional

J.-M. List et al. (2018): CLICS 2: An improved database of cross-linguistic colexifications assembling lexical data with the help of cross-linguistic data formats. *Linguistic Typology*. DOI: 10.1515/lingty-2018-0010. – URL: <https://www.degruyter.com/view/j/lity.2018.22.issue-2/lingty-2018-0010/lingty-2018-0010.xml>.

6. Grading System

Grading system is based on cumulative grading of all course elements.

A student's success in each segment of guest lectures is **assessed** basing on a written assignment which may be a mini-research, an essay or a test, to be determined by the instructor responsible for this segment and to be submitted / accomplished at the end of the segment. In

the case of a mini-research, the grade is based on the coverage of the topic / relevancy of the methodology and outcomes to the topic of the segment. In the case of an essay, the grade is based on how exhaustively the topic is covered. Essays and mini-research may be done in small groups. In the case of the test, the grade is based on the number of questions answered in their entirety.

If allowed by the director of the MA program, the student may be exempt from some topics that are of less relevance to his or her research interests. **There is no final examination.**

Grading system for research projects module is based on evaluation of students' presentations and, primarily, on the progress of the project. Grades are discussed between the project supervisors and the supervisors of the research seminar.

Students' assessment for the field linguistics module depends on the results of the project on typological description of a semantic domain, conducted in a small group.

7. Guidelines for Knowledge Assessment

The final grade (G_f) is the arithmetic mean of the accumulated grades (G_a) of all course modules:

$$G_f = 0.33G_{\text{field}} + 0.33G_{\text{m-c}} + 0.33G_{\text{rp}}$$

The grades are rounded in favour of the student.

Table of Grade Accordance

Ten-point Grading Scale	Five-point Grading Scale	
1 - very bad 2 - bad 3 - no pass	no pass - 2	FAIL
4 - pass 5 - highly pass	pass - 3	PASS
6 - good 7 - very good	good - 4	
8 - almost excellent 9 - excellent 10 - perfect	excellent - 5	

The resulting grade for the course counts towards the certificate of Master's degree.

8. Methods of Instruction

The course is delivered in lectures and classes, eventually including discussions of home reading and ongoing research projects.

9. Special Equipment and Software Support

The course requires regular equipment for presentations.