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INTEGRATING MENTORING AND LANGUAGE COACHING INTO RESEARCH TRAINING: BUILDING REFLECTIVE AND AUTONOMOUS SCHOLARS

This article examines the strategic integration of academic mentoring and specialized language coaching into the research training of master's and doctoral students, championing a hybrid, learner-centered approach. Traditional models of academic supervision often prioritize expert control and prescriptive evaluation, a dynamic that can inadvertently limit student autonomy, reflective practice, and intrinsic motivation—factors critical for developing independent researchers.

By contrast, this integrative model adopts a learner-centered paradigm, leveraging the strengths of both structured mentoring and coaching psychology. Mentoring provides foundational guidance on research design and ethical conduct, while Neurolanguage Coaching (NLC) focuses specifically on enhancing critical thinking, self-regulation, and high-stakes academic communication skills (particularly in English). Drawing on core principles from NLC, modern educational mentoring theories, and established European frameworks for postgraduate training, this study explores how personalized guidance substantially enhances both linguistic proficiency and core research competencies.

The paper presents compelling evidence, including case studies and practical examples, drawn from implementation within Ukrainian universities. These examples demonstrate the tangible benefits of mentoring-coaching models in cultivating autonomous, reflective, and ethically responsible researchers. Key findings illustrate improvements in students' metacognitive awareness, confidence in presenting complex research in English, and the ability to manage the emotional demands of advanced study.

Ultimately, this research argues that such integrative approaches are essential for aligning Ukrainian postgraduate education with contemporary international standards. Furthermore, this model effectively addresses pressing local challenges, including overcoming academic language barriers, boosting academic confidence, and accelerating the development of a professional research identity among emerging scholars. The combination of structured support and neuroscientifically informed language training offers a powerful pathway to fostering a resilient and globally competitive cohort of researchers.

Key words: Mentoring, Language Coaching, Higher Education, Research Training, Academic Autonomy, Postgraduate Education, Ukrainian Universities, Neurolanguage Coaching, Student – centered approach, Teaching English.

Анна РАЙЖЕЛЬ

ІНТЕГРАЦІЯ МЕНТОРИНГУ ТА МОВНОГО КОУЧИНГУ ДЛЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ НАУКОВОЇ ПІДГОТОВКИ: ФОРМУВАННЯ РЕФЛЕКСИВНИХ І АВТОНОМНИХ ДОСЛІДНИКІВ

У статті розглядається стратегічна інтеграція академічного менторингу та спеціалізованого мовного коучингу в систему наукової підготовки магістрантів та аспірантів. Визначено, що традиційні моделі наукового керівництва часто акцентують увагу на контролі та оцінюванні, що

може обмежувати автономію, саморефлексію та внутрішню мотивацію здобувачів — ключові чинники становлення незалежного дослідника.

На протипагу цьому запропонована гібридна модель ґрунтується на гуманістичній та здобувачецентрованій парадигмі. Вона поєднує структуроване наставництво (менторинг) із принципами Нейролінгвістичного Коучингу (НЛК). Дослідження висвітлює, як цей персоналізований супровід сприяє цілеспрямованому розвитку критичного мислення, навичок саморегуляції, академічного письма та наукової комунікації (зокрема, іноземними мовами). Спираючись на ідеї НЛК та європейські стандарти докторської освіти, робота демонструє, що інтеграція менторських і коучингових практик формує підтримувальне освітнє середовище.

Доведено, що в такому середовищі молоді науковці розвивають не лише мовну й методологічну компетентність, а й емоційну стійкість, самоорганізацію та відповідальність. Впровадження таких підходів у систему підготовки наукових кадрів сприяє становленню рефлексивних, упевнених та етично свідомих дослідників. Зрештою, стаття аргументує, що інтегративний підхід забезпечує відповідність української післядипломної освіти міжнародним стандартам, одночасно вирішуючи локальні виклики, пов'язані з академічною впевненістю та становленням дослідницької ідентичності.

Ключові слова: наставництво, мовний коучинг, вища освіта, наукова підготовка, академічна автономія, післядипломна освіта, українські університети, нейромовний коучинг, студентоорієнтований підхід, викладання англійської мови.

Introduction. In contemporary higher education, the preparation of master's and doctoral students extends beyond the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge to encompass the development of research competencies, critical thinking, academic communication, and professional identity. Globally, universities are increasingly recognizing that traditional models of academic supervision, which often focus on control, task completion, and evaluation, are insufficient for fostering autonomous, reflective, and innovative researchers [1, p. 23]. This challenge is particularly acute in non-native English contexts, where students must navigate additional linguistic and cultural barriers to participate effectively in the international research community.

Mentoring and language coaching have emerged as promising strategies for addressing these challenges. Mentoring emphasizes a partnership-based approach in which experienced researchers provide guidance, feedback, and support to early-career scholars, fostering professional growth, self-reflection, and resilience [7, p. 12]. Language coaching, including neurolanguage coaching approaches, focuses on developing students' academic writing, communication skills, and cognitive strategies in a manner that reduces anxiety, promotes learner autonomy, and enhances metacognitive awareness [9, p. 3].

In Ukraine, higher education has undergone significant reforms in alignment with European standards, including the Bologna Process and the adoption of the European Framework for Research Careers (European Commission, 2023). However, challenges remain in the effective integration of mentoring and language coaching into postgraduate research training, particularly in disciplines requiring strong English-language proficiency for publication and international collaboration. Many Ukrainian graduate students report difficulties in academic writing, presentation skills, and independent research planning, which may limit their participation in global academic discourse.

The present study adopts a hybrid perspective, combining international theory on mentoring and language coaching with practical examples and case studies from Ukrainian universities.

The research aims to explore how these integrative approaches can enhance academic autonomy, reflective practice, and research identity among master's and doctoral students. Specifically, it investigates the mechanisms through which mentoring and language coaching support the development of cognitive, linguistic, and professional skills and examines the outcomes of these interventions in the Ukrainian context. By doing so, the study

contributes to the ongoing discourse on the modernization of postgraduate education and the alignment of local practices with international standards.

Literature Review Mentoring has been widely recognized as a critical factor in the professional and personal development of postgraduate students. According to Johnson and Ridley [7, p. 6], mentoring in higher education involves a structured relationship in which an experienced scholar supports the mentee's growth, providing guidance on research design, academic writing, career planning, and professional identity formation. Effective mentoring fosters self-reflection, emotional resilience, and the ability to navigate complex academic environments [1, p. 34].

In the European context, mentoring has become an integral component of doctoral education, emphasizing collaborative knowledge construction and the development of transferable skills (European Commission, 2023). Programs such as the UK's Vitae Researcher Development Framework highlight mentoring as essential for fostering autonomous, reflective researchers capable of contributing to both local and international academic communities.

Language proficiency is a fundamental requirement for participation in global academic discourse. Traditional language instruction often focuses on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition, which, while important, may not address the affective and cognitive needs of researchers engaged in complex academic writing tasks. Language coaching, particularly neurolanguage coaching (NLC), has emerged as a learner-centered approach that integrates neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and coaching principles to promote effective language acquisition [9, p. 8].

NLC emphasizes the development of metacognitive awareness, learner autonomy, and emotional regulation. By focusing on goal setting, reflective practices, and personalized feedback, NLC enables students to overcome language anxiety, improve academic writing skills, and develop confidence in oral and written scholarly communication [5, p. 88]. Research indicates that students who engage in

neurolanguage coaching report higher levels of motivation, self-efficacy, and satisfaction with their academic progress.

Recent studies suggest that combining mentoring and language coaching creates synergistic benefits for postgraduate researchers. Mentoring provides guidance on research methodology, professional norms, and career development, while language coaching supports the acquisition of the linguistic and cognitive skills necessary to communicate research effectively. This integrated approach fosters the development of reflective, autonomous, and ethically responsible scholars capable of engaging in international academic discourse [3, p. 144].

In Ukraine, higher education institutions have increasingly experimented with such integrative models. Case studies from leading Ukrainian universities indicate that mentorship programs combined with structured language support improve student outcomes in thesis writing, research presentations, and conference participation.

For instance, targeted mentoring in combination with academic writing workshops and one-on-one language coaching has been shown to enhance students' ability to publish in international journals and participate in cross-border collaborative research.

While international research strongly supports the benefits of mentoring and language coaching, there remain gaps in empirical studies within the Ukrainian context. Many postgraduate programs still rely on traditional supervision models, and language support is often limited to optional courses rather than integrated, personalized coaching. Additionally, systematic evaluation of outcomes—such as student autonomy, reflective capacity, and research productivity—remains limited. This gap underscores the need for research that explores practical applications of integrated mentoring-coaching approaches and evaluates their effectiveness in Ukrainian higher education settings.

The literature demonstrates a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for the integration of mentoring and language coaching in postgraduate education. International research emphasizes the value of learner-cen-

tered, reflective, and autonomy-promoting approaches, while emerging studies in Ukraine highlight the potential for these strategies to address linguistic, cognitive, and professional challenges faced by master's and doctoral students. These insights provide the rationale for the present study, which investigates the mechanisms and outcomes of integrating mentoring and language coaching within Ukrainian postgraduate programs.

Outline of main findings Analysis of qualitative data (semi-structured interviews and observation notes) revealed five overarching themes that demonstrate how the integrated model of academic mentoring and Neurolanguage Coaching (NLC) significantly supports both the academic and personal development of students. This combined approach moves beyond traditional instruction to foster comprehensive growth in research skills, language proficiency, and self-management.

1. Fostering Research Autonomy and Ownership The mentoring component effectively facilitates enhanced research autonomy. Rather than providing prescriptive instructions, mentors employed scaffolding techniques, guiding students in structuring their research while explicitly encouraging independent decision-making regarding methodology and research design. This approach empowers students to take ownership of their work, cultivating the identity of a "true researcher" capable of autonomous inquiry.

2. Improving Academic English Communication and Writing Neurolanguage coaching proves highly effective in boosting academic writing and English communication skills. Specifically, NLC focused on the structured organization of ideas and the accurate use of discipline-specific academic vocabulary in English. The application of techniques such as goal mapping, reflective journaling, and iterative feedback demonstrably promoted metacognitive awareness and self-regulation. Observations confirmed that students actively engaged with these strategies, leading to greater confidence in drafting, presenting, and preparing research for international conferences.

3. Cultivating Reflective Practice and Self-Efficacy A key outcome is the development of reflective practice, with students reg-

ularly engaging in self-assessment to identify their strengths and areas for development. This process directly fostered higher self-efficacy. By learning to break complex tasks (like thesis writing) into manageable steps and reflect on incremental progress, students reported a reduction in academic anxiety and a strengthened conviction in their ability to complete research tasks independently.

4. Providing Emotional Resilience and Motivational Support The integrated program serves as a vital source of emotional support and motivation. Students report a decrease in stress and an increase in engagement, attributing this to the dual reassurance of expert guidance alongside the encouragement of independence. The supportive environment mitigates the fear of making mistakes (both in English usage and research design), thereby sustaining motivation throughout the demanding research process.

5. Tailored Integration within the Ukrainian Academic Context Crucially, this approach is effectively integrated into the Ukrainian higher education environment. Mentorship and coaching incorporate research practices and discipline-specific vocabulary directly relevant to local English majors. This tailored approach accelerates students' readiness for international academic participation, resulting in a significant improvement in the ability to engage with English-language research literature and conferences within a short timeframe.

In conclusion, the convergence of qualitative evidence strongly suggests that mentoring and NLC offer a complementary framework that successfully bridges gaps in academic support within the Ukrainian context, particularly regarding English-language research communication and researcher independence. This model yields not only quantitative improvements in skills but also qualitative growth in emotional resilience, metacognition, and practical skill acquisition.

The findings provide compelling evidence that the integration of mentoring and language coaching enhances the development of reflective, autonomous, and competent researchers. Consistent with international literature, mentoring facilitates the acquisition of research skills, professional identity, and

critical thinking, while language coaching addresses the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of academic communication [7, p. 55–56].

Bridging Theory and Practice The results support the theoretical premise that learner-centered, autonomy-promoting approaches are more effective than traditional top-down supervision models. Mentoring that emphasizes partnership, goal-setting, and reflective dialogue fosters both cognitive and affective development. Likewise, neurolanguage coaching provides strategies that enable students to regulate their learning, manage anxiety, and apply metacognitive skills to complex writing and presentation tasks.

The Ukrainian case studies demonstrate that these theoretical principles can be successfully adapted to local contexts. For instance, pairing mentors with students according to discipline-specific expertise and aligning language coaching with research genres allows interventions to meet the practical needs of Ukrainian postgraduate students. These results suggest that international models of mentoring and language coaching are not only transferable but can be tailored to address context-specific challenges, including language barriers, limited exposure to international research standards, and the emotional demands of advanced study.

The Ukrainian context presents unique challenges in this regard. Many postgraduate programs historically relied on directive supervision, leaving students less equipped for independent research. By introducing structured mentoring and language coaching, universities fostered a culture of self-directed learning, where students could critically assess their work and gradually take responsibility for their academic trajectory.

Improving Academic Writing and Communication Language coaching emerged as a critical component in addressing English-language proficiency gaps. Students reported higher confidence in drafting manuscripts, presenting findings, and engaging with international literature. These improvements are consistent with international findings indicating that personalized language support enhances research productivity and reduces anxiety.

Moreover, the integration of discipline-specific language content allowed Ukrainian students to apply academic English in authentic contexts, facilitating smoother participation in conferences, collaborations, and publications. This finding underscores the importance of contextualizing language coaching to the research needs and goals of students, rather than adopting generic language instruction.

Implications for Ukrainian Higher Education The findings have several practical implications for higher education institutions in Ukraine:

Program Design – Integrating mentoring and language coaching into formal postgraduate curricula can provide structured support for student development. Programs should align mentor expertise with student research goals and include language coaching that addresses discipline-specific needs. Training Mentors and Coaches – Institutions should invest in training academic staff in mentoring techniques and neurolanguage coaching methods to ensure effective implementation.

Policy and Standards Alignment – Embedding mentoring and coaching within institutional policies aligns Ukrainian postgraduate programs with European frameworks (European Commission, 2023), supporting internationalization and research quality.

Evaluation and Feedback – Systematic monitoring and evaluation of mentoring-coaching programs, using both qualitative and quantitative measures, can provide evidence for continuous improvement and inform best practices.

Conclusions. This study demonstrates that the integration of mentoring and language coaching into postgraduate research training has substantial benefits for developing autonomous, reflective, and academically competent scholars. By combining international theoretical frameworks with practical applications in Ukrainian higher education, the study illustrates how structured support enhances research autonomy, academic writing proficiency, reflective practice, and emotional resilience. Students participating in mentoring-coaching programs demonstrated increased ability to plan, evaluate, and in-

dependently conduct research. Language coaching, particularly when tailored to discipline-specific needs, significantly improved students' confidence and skills in English-language academic writing and presentations. Mentoring and coaching supported the development of critical thinking, goal-setting, and metacognitive strategies, resulting in greater self-efficacy and reduced anxiety. The interventions provided a psychologically safe space, reinforcing resilience, engagement, and motivation among students.

The study highlights the practical relevance of integrating mentoring and language coaching in Ukrainian higher education, where traditional supervisory models often do not fully address the cognitive, linguistic, and affective dimensions of postgraduate research. By aligning these programs with European standards, universities can foster internationally competent researchers, improve research

quality, and contribute to the modernization of national higher education practices.

Future research should examine longitudinal outcomes of integrated mentoring-coaching programs, expand to additional disciplines and institutions, and explore the scalability of these interventions. Additionally, further investigation into the impact on publication rates, international collaboration, and professional career development would provide deeper insights into the long-term effectiveness of these approaches.

In conclusion, the integration of mentoring and language coaching represents a transformative strategy in postgraduate education. It not only equips students with essential academic and linguistic skills but also cultivates a culture of reflective practice, autonomy, and resilience, ensuring that emerging scholars are prepared to thrive in both local and international research environments.

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