

Proposed Director of Studies: Prof. Clare Wood

Project Title:

Understanding and enhancing the impact of speech rhythm-based training on children's reading development

Expected REF Unit of Assessment: A04 Psychology

Summary of project:

Previous work has shown that there appears to be a link between children's reading development and their performance on measures of speech rhythm sensitivity. In particular, it has been found that children with reading difficulties show deficits in processing speech rhythm, and other researchers have also found evidence of consistent deficits in auditory processing linked to speech rhythm in individuals with dyslexia, and such deficits appear to be apparent across languages. Most recently, members of the supervisory team have found that primary school-aged children who receive training designed to enhance their sensitivity to aspects of speech rhythm (such as intonation, stress and timing of utterances) benefit in terms of their word reading performance after just a short period of training. We are looking for a candidate who is able to continue to develop this work in two key areas:

1. By examining the pedagogic context of such training, so that we can optimize the outcomes of such training for children's early reading development.
2. By developing a revised theoretical model which can explain how and when speech rhythm might contribute to children's early reading development.

We are looking for a candidate who will bring their own experience and reading of the research literature to this topic, but we anticipate that the project will comprise the following combination of studies:

- A cross-lagged longitudinal study of children's early reading development,
- An experimental study which examines children's speech rhythm sensitivity in the pre school years,
- An intervention study aimed at Key Stage 1 children, comparing different combinations of speech rhythm, phonological awareness and phonics based training.

The successful candidate will therefore need to be confident working with young children and educational professionals, whilst also having a good understanding of the psychological literature on children's reading development.

Specific qualifications/subject areas required of the applicants for this project (e.g. First degree in specific subject area):

UK 1st Class / 2.1 Bachelor's degree (or UK equivalent according to NARIC) in psychology, or education is essential. A Masters in either psychology, education or linguistics is desirable.

Application deadline: 5pm (UK time) on 26th May 2017

Funding notes

This studentship competition is open to applicants who wish to study for a PhD on a full-time basis only. The studentship will pay UK/EU fees (currently set at £4,195 for 2017/18 and are revised annually) and provide a maintenance stipend linked to the RCUK rate (this is revised annually and is currently £14,553 for academic year 2017/18) for up to three years*. The studentships will be expected to commence in 2017.

*Applications from non-EU students are welcome, but a successful non-EU candidate would be responsible for paying the difference between non-EU and UK/EU fees. (Fees for 2017/18 are £12,900 for non-EU students and £4,195 for UK/EU students)