Call for Ph.D. thesis applications for a project entitled “Sustaining oral communicative skills in children with HI”

RESEARCH FIELD: Linguistics, Psychological sciences, Speech therapy

SUPERVISION: H. Loevenbruck & A. Vilain

SCIENTIFIC DEPARTMENT (LABORATORY’S NAME): Laboratoire de Psychologie et NeuroCognition (CNRS UMR 5105) & GIPSA-lab (CNRS UMR 5216), Université Grenoble Alpes

DOCTORAL SCHOOL: Ecole Doctorale Ingénierie pour la Santé, la Cognition et l’Environnement (EDISCE)

Envisioned start, duration and funding
The funding will cover the 3 years of a full-time PhD (approx. 2300 € monthly salary, including employer and employee taxes deductions in France, plus 500 € per month as Mobility Allowance if entitled). Ideally the starting date would be between September or October 2020. The ESR will also have access to funds to cover research and training costs.

Job description
The aim of the project is to examine the impact of different intervention methods on the development of oral communication skills. The successful candidate will conduct behavioural tests on speech production and perception skills of French-speaking children with hearing impairment, and confront these data with audiological and linguistic information on the children’s history of remediation, language exposure, degree of deafness and on hearing technologies used. This position is a part of the H2020 Marie-Curie Innovative Training Network project (Comm4CHILD) that received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 860755.

Requested expertise
Candidates should have a strong background in speech sciences, cognitive psychology, or speech therapy. Former experience with recording and analysis of audio data and with the use of statistical packages such as R, SPSS or Statistica is an asset. The candidate should have native or near-native proficiency in French, as the children tested will be French-speaking. Good oral and written communication skills in English are required. Knowledge of French Cued Speech and/or LSF (Langue des Signes Française) will be appreciated. Interest in audition and hearing impairment, and experience conducting independent research with children and families are relevant additional criteria. Motivation to work with children is a primary quality for the job.

Eligibility criteria:
Candidates must have obtained a degree which formally entitles them to embark on a doctorate, either in the country in which the degree was obtained or in the country in which the researcher is recruited. The candidate must have resided or carried out their main activity in a different country from the host organisation for at least 12 months prior to their recruitment. This excludes short stays such as holidays. Candidates cannot have been awarded a doctoral degree and/or completed more than four years of full-time equivalent research experience.

Applications:
Interested candidates should submit (a) a cover letter describing their background, research experiences, interests, and goals, (b) a curriculum vitae, (c) at least one letter of recommendation from
Scientific description

Specific objectives: Although hearing technologies can often efficiently restore auditory functions, there is a large range of recuperation levels, and some children with HI have difficulties developing adequate oral language skills. We expect that speech skills can be predicted by audiological profile, communicative experience, and intervention method. Thorough quantitative descriptions of the speech abilities of children with HI are needed to sort out predicting factors and to improve intervention strategies. The aim of this project is to provide an account of speech production and perception abilities in children with prelingual HI with various audiological and linguistic profiles, and who benefit from various intervention methods. Fine acoustic measurements, intelligibility assessments, and perception tests will be combined. The impact of intervention methods on these measurements will be assessed. / Expected Results: This study will provide a quantitative normative description of the various speech patterns of children with HI in relation to predictive factors, such as age of implantation, duration of implant use, communication modes and practice, unilateral vs. bilateral implantation. These normative data will provide a comprehensive overview of the oral communicative skills of children with HI and help us to establish evidence-based guidelines for early speech remediation and school support for this specific population. Bridges will be built between linguistics, psychoacoustics, audiology, and sociolinguistics.

Planned secondments: A secondment will take place at the University of Leeds and at Bradford Teaching Hospitals (UK) for 6 months. It will enable the ESR to broaden her/his perspective on intervention methods and educational settings in different countries, and to benefit from direct experience of daily contacts with patients with HI and their caregivers, increasing their awareness of the reality of their situations.

Contact address
For more information:
Helene.Loevenbruck@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr and Anne.Vilain@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

Image: https://alpc.asso.fr/