**4 PhD positions in linguistics/psychology of language**

**General**

The FAU seeks to appoint four doctoral researchers in empirical linguistics. The researchers will be based in the Department of English and American Studies and will be part of an international research group funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and headed by Prof. Ewa Dąbrowska. In addition to these four positions, the group includes three post-doctoral researchers (all based at FAU) and two doctoral researchers based at the University of Birmingham. The group’s research focuses on individual differences in first language (L1) and second/foreign language (L2) acquisition and attainment. In particular, we examine relationships between individual strengths and weaknesses in specific areas of linguistic and non-linguistic cognition, with a view to developing and testing hypotheses about which aspects of language depend on which aspects of cognition. Our research focusses on three main strands: explicit and implicit language aptitude, language and literacy, and fluency. For more details, see https://www.angam.phil.fau.de/fields/engling/chair-of-language-and-cognition-prof-dabrowska/individual-differences-in-language-acquisition-and-attainment/.

The doctoral researchers will work on the following projects:

**The relationship between the L1 and the L2 in bilingual speakers**

Most research on bilingualism assesses the linguistic proficiency in only one of the bilingual speaker’s languages, and as a result, we know little about the relationship between competence in the L1 and the L2. This project will investigate the role of age of acquisition, linguistic experience and language aptitude on ultimate attainment in both languages. It is anticipated that the researcher will work with German-English bilinguals, but candidates wishing to work with other language combinations will also be considered. The results obtained in this study will allow us to address some of the most burning questions in contemporary second language research, such as whether there is a critical period for language learning and the effects of learning a second language on a speaker’s first language.

**Later language development (2 positions)**

The vast majority of research on first language acquisition focusses on development in the early years. These projects will break with the tradition by focussing on later language development (between the ages of 5 and 15). The first project will focus on the effects of literacy on later development (in particular, on the development of subordination and other complex syntactic structures, and lexical development) and thus link up with the literacy strand of the group’s research. The second project will focus on the development of automaticity in language production and processing (as evidenced, for example, by the speed of lexical and grammatical processing, verbal fluency, and EEG responses to grammatical violations).

**The grammatical abilities of illiterate/low literate speakers**

This project is part of the literacy strand and will examine the effects of literacy on the linguistic skills of adults by comparing highly literate and low-literate or illiterate speakers on a variety of linguistic tasks. Depending on the interests of the researcher, the main focus could be either on the development on grammatical complexity and lexical diversity in spontaneous production, or on grammatical comprehension. It is anticipated that the data for this project will be collected either in Spain or in Latin America (and therefore the language studied will be Spanish); however, if the researcher has access to low-literate/illiterate communities in other countries, other languages could be considered as well.

**Selection criteria**

*Essential:*

* A good MA in Linguistics, Cognitive Psychology or a related area
* Familiarity with usage-based models of language
* Good IT skills
* Fluent in English
* Ability to work both independently and as part of a team

*Desirable:*

* Knowledge of German
* Experience in designing and carrying out psycholinguistic experiments
* Experience working with children and/or low-educated participants
* Familiarity with standard statistical tests and software

**Main Duties**

* Design and carry out research
* Write up publications and present at conferences
* Teach at undergraduate level (2-3 hours per week)
* Undertake any other duties consistent with the level and nature of the post

**Application process**

Applications should be in English and should be sent to Ms Gabel-Cunningam ([barbara.gabel-cunningham@fau.de](mailto:barbara.gabel-cunningham@fau.de)) and should include the following:

(1) a CV

(2) contact details for three referees

(3) a covering letter (about 2 pages) indicating which project you are applying for and how you could contribute to it

(4) a work sample (in English if possible; otherwise in German).

Informal inquiries can be directed to Prof. Ewa Dąbrowska (ewa.dabrowska@fau.de).

**Deadline for applications**: 8 February 2020

**Salary starting point**: €31217 per annum (65% of E13, point 1)

**Starting time**: 1 April 2020 or as soon thereafter as possible

**Length of appointment**: 3-4 years

It is anticipated that the interviews for the posts will take place in the first week of March 2020.