



## **Vacancy notice for 2 PhD researchers (4 years - 100%)**

**ACTo – Academic Language Centre**

**Vrije Universiteit Brussel**

**ACTo** is the Academic Language Centre of the VUB, and is devoted to the teaching of modern languages. It also organizes language tests and monitors revisions of academic texts. In order to advance understanding of both theoretical and practical considerations in the field of language learning and teaching, we are currently looking for **two academic researchers in Applied Linguistics**. The specific focus will be upon French and English in university contexts. The successful candidates will conduct **4 years of research**, and will participate in national and international conferences and networks. The research topics should be aligned with **one of the following project outlines**:

### **I Research proposal 1**

*Implementing, evaluating and optimizing the use of language portfolios in L2 instruction*

#### **General objective**

Innovation in language learning and teaching and enhancing pedagogy for autonomy through the use of L2 portfolios.

#### **Description**

This project aims to investigate the implementation and the effectiveness of the use of language portfolios in L2 instruction in tertiary education / in a university context. Established uses of L2 portfolios will be looked into and assessed from a learner perspective, with the aim of establishing best practices for L2 portfolio implementation.

#### **Brief outline of the research**

- 1) Overview of the existing research into/on L2 portfolio use.
- 2) Assessment of established cases of L2 portfolio use from both a learner and teacher perspective.
- 3) Larger-scale implementation of an L2 portfolio in a language course, and assessment of the effects of L2 portfolio use on learner outcomes and learner motivation in a quasi-experimental design (experimental & control groups).
- 4) Recommendations for best practices in L2 portfolio implementation.

## **II Research proposal 2**

*Development of a blended learning program for L2-for-specific-purposes courses.*

### **General objective**

A blended learning program, if implemented effectively, can promote *learner autonomy*, cater to individual learner differences and the need for flexibility, and provide language learners with more opportunities for interactivity and personal feedback.

### **Description**

This project aims to develop and assess a blended learning model for ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and FSP (French for Specific Purposes) courses (or alternatively, a Dutch for Academic Purposes course).

### **Outline of the Research**

- 1) Overview of the existing research into/on (L2) blended learning.
- 2) Assessment of established L2 blended learning programs in similar settings, from both a learner and teacher perspective.
- 3) Development and implementation of an L2 blended learning program for an ESP and/or FSP course on the basis of existing materials (or, alternatively, development and implementation of an L2 blended learning program for a Dutch for Academic Purposes course).
- 4) Assessment of learner outcomes and measurement of learner motivation in a quasi-experimental design.
- 5) Assessment of the teachers' experience of the program.
- 6) Recommendations for a sound L2 blended learning program.

## **III Research proposal 3**

*CLIL in higher education: a case study of the civil engineering program at the VUB-ULB (Brussels, Belgium).*

### **General objective**

Enhancing foreign language proficiency and promoting internationalization through the implementation of CLIL (content and language integrated learning) in higher education.

### **Description**

In order to implement CLIL in a university context, this project will look into the existing trilingual Dutch-French-English CLIL program for civil engineers at the VUB (a Dutch language university) and the ULB (a French language university) in order to assess its effectiveness, both in terms of learner outcomes and the foreign language proficiency attained. This will allow principles to be established for the implementation of CLIL in higher education more broadly.

### **Outline of the research**

- 1) Overview of the existing CLIL research (at a tertiary level / in a university context).

- 2) Description and assessment of the particular CLIL program under consideration from both a learner and teacher perspective.
- 3) Comparison of CLIL students with students in a traditional monolingual context in terms of learner outcomes, learner motivation and language proficiency, in a quasi-experimental design.

### ***Your profile***

- You have a Master's Degree in Language and Literature, a Master's Degree in Linguistics, a Master's Degree in Translation, Interpretation or Multilingual Communication or an equivalent degree. French or English should be part of your academic studies.
- You have an excellent and demonstrable academic track record.
- Having research experience is a plus.
- You can work individually as well as in a team.
- You are a dynamic and flexible person who likes to organize, shows initiative, and has the ability to take personal responsibility for your interpretation of the tasks to be undertaken, indicating independence, maturity and seriousness of intent.

### ***We offer***

- A full time position as a doctoral researcher for 4 years, starting on 1st July 2014 at the earliest.
- A stimulating and supportive environment that will enable you to pursue your personal research ambitions.

### ***Procedure***

Interested candidates should submit an **electronic application** to **acto@vub.ac.be** mentioning "PhD Applied Linguistics" in the subject line by **15th June**. Your electronic application should include:

- a letter of motivation (stating clearly your preferences concerning the 3 projects outlined above)
- a CV
- a 1-page summary of your master thesis
- a copy of your diploma
- in case you have publications (optional), a copy of what you consider to be your most significant publication

By 20th June you will be informed of the outcome of the first selection round, conducted on the basis of the information and documents you have provided. If positive, you will be invited for an interview, which will take place before the end of June. For more information about the PhD position, please contact July De Wilde ([july.de.wilde@vub.ac.be](mailto:july.de.wilde@vub.ac.be)).