POSTGRADUATE PERSONAL STATEMENT EXAMPLE

CLINICAL LINGUISTICS

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Postgraduate Personal Statement Example: Clinical Linguistics

My motivation to study language disorders stems from my experience working with children with special needs growing up in bilingual families and communities. Working closely with speech-language pathologists in the Marshall Learning Group, an international special education centre, I reflected on how to best support language-impaired people as a researcher. Spending around two months with a child with Williams syndrome who could speak three languages encouraged me to look beyond the double dissociation between language and cognition. Accordingly, I assessed the language abilities in Williams syndrome, such as pragmatic ability, in a multilingual context. This experience provided me with a research focus on bilingual children with neurodevelopmental disorders and how their brains process speech and language, underpinning my decision to choose Clinical Linguistics for postgraduate study.

My undergraduate studies in English Language and Applied Linguistics prepared me to explore psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics concerning language impairments in more depth. I am focused on applying my robust knowledge of internal linguistics, such as morphology and syntax, to understand how language is processed and represented in the mind and brain. Learning the dual-route model in visual word recognition, I grasped the classification of dyslexia in the psycholinguistics module. This sparked more comprehensive research interests in examining electrophysiological and clinical evidence of dyslexia. As a proactive learner, I gained access to neurolinguistic learning resources regarding language-related brain anatomy and neuroimaging techniques used in language disorder research. Building upon my understanding of the theoretical frameworks of dyslexia with the Cerebellar Theory deepened my knowledge of the causal relations between brain dysfunctions and language disorders such as aphasia and specific language impairment. Keen to better understand the psychological reality of human language processing mechanisms, I am enthusiastic about studying in this transnational research master's programme.

Slater University's language disorders and neuroimaging techniques modules align with my research interest in atypical language development. Acknowledging autistic children's

difficulties comprehending indirect speech acts, I conducted a speech-act analysis of ASD International's Buckley Corpus data. To achieve this, I applied CHILDES clinical corpora and focused on the children's pragmatic language deficits when volunteering at the autism support centre. Interviewing their speech-language pathologist led me to consider other receptive language difficulties, such as auditory processing disorders. Consequently, I am passionate about taking the module Language and Speech Disorders in Children and studying with Dr Lula Mogul, whose research focus is children's auditory processing difficulties, to investigate the speech and hearing disorders affecting speech perception and comprehension.

Seeking to intervene in speech perception deficits, I was attracted by the module detailing serious games and app development for the language-impaired population. Working in the CogniFit brain-training research project against neurodegeneration, I observed serious cognitive training games extensively used in clinical practice to evaluate participants' progress in auditory perceptual and cognitive skills. During this process, I became familiar with the EMCL++ programme, where I can develop serious game concepts that can facilitate healthcare professionals' intervention for children with speech perception and recognition difficulties. I also aim to study the mechanisms of neuroplasticity by using neuroimaging techniques to discover how language-impaired users' brains react to similar training activities. Equally, the Neuroimaging and Language module for online techniques, such as event-related potentials, will equip me with the necessary knowledge to measure brain activity during speech processing.

The psycholinguistic modules at James University, and the opportunity to participate in the Science of Aphasia Conference, are valuable for my research on bilingualism and language disorders. Inspired by my work experience with occupational therapists, I researched phonological iconicity with Chinese-English bilinguals to discover the gustatory meanings of specific phonemes shared in both languages. This speech perception research led me to the undergraduate psycholinguistics conference, where I presented my research findings on an academic poster and exchanged ideas with my colleagues and visiting scholars. This strengthened my confidence to engage with seasoned scholars at the Science of Aphasia Conference, discuss the latest breakthroughs in clinical linguistics and possibly find my master's thesis supervisor.

To better understand how bilingual speakers' languages interact, I continued to study speech perception in language acquisition. Using a Python-based programme in PsychoPy to run the experiment and ANOVA in SPSS for data analysis, I researched brain-intact Chinese-English bilingual adult learners' phonological transfer when learning a third language. These behavioural experiments kindled my curiosity about the structural plasticity in the bilingual brain, which I expect to pursue in the Bilingualism module. Meanwhile, I aim to enhance my research and statistical analysis skills in the Eye-Tracking Research and Statistics and Research Methods in Psycholinguistics modules.

In addition to the Language and Autism module, I desire to explore speech research modules at the University of Wildstein. Having worked with children with Down's syndrome who find it challenging to pronounce certain words in the drama script during the rehearsal, I hope to move my research beyond speech perception to speech production at the phonetics level. Using Praat in the Articulatory, Acoustic and Perceptual Analysis of Speech Motor Disorders module, I am eager to study motor speech impairments to develop interventions for childhood dysarthria. This has expanded my capacity to think critically and learn from previous

experiences, which will be beneficial when completing an internship researching language-impaired people's speech processing at the EMCL++-associated partner, the SPRN Center on Cognition, Brain and Language in Spain. I will combine practical application with my master's thesis and future PhD research into bilingual neurodiverse children's communication difficulties.

As an aspiring clinical linguist, I will unite with SLP and other clinical practitioners to contribute to a comprehensive evidence base for helping bilingual and language-impaired children with developmental disabilities. Being a language lover and a speaker of three European languages, I look forward to an immersive study of Dutch and Finnish. Keen to acclimate to different learning settings, I am positive about working with peers from diverse cultural and language backgrounds and sharing my culture with them. Additionally, I will value the opportunity to participate in mobility activities and establish interpersonal and professional networks with alums and teaching cohorts worldwide. This course will unlock my potential in Clinical Linguistics and widen my engagement with related subjects in this field. I am dedicated to exploring numerous aspects of the language-brain relationship and intend to pursue further research as a PhD candidate upon graduation.