

Job Description

PhD in Descriptive Linguistics

“Description of the endangered Mönpa language of Bhutan”

Post Title:	PhD Researcher in Descriptive Linguistics
Post Status:	48 months, full-time
Starting Date:	March 2026
Department/Faculty:	School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Reports to (supervisors):	Associate Professor Tim Bodt
Location:	Trinity College Dublin (Dublin, Ireland)
Stipend:	Maintenance stipend of €25,000 per annum with tuition fees (both EU and non-EU) covered by the project; in addition, relevant fieldwork expenses, conference travel, and relocation expenses will also be covered by the project.
Closing Date:	30 September 2025 23:00 GMT

Summary of Post

Doctoral researcher in Descriptive Linguistics for ERC project “Lo-Rig”

The School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences is seeking to recruit a highly motivated and outstanding doctoral researcher for a period of 4 years (48 months). Candidates are given the opportunity to work on a structured PhD in descriptive linguistics, writing a grammatical description of the Mönpa language of Bhutan based on a corpus of natural speech and elicitation. We are seeking applicants who are intrinsically motivated in working on the European Research Council-funded project “Lo-Rig”.

Description of the endangered Mönpa language of Bhutan

The five-year project “Lo-Rig: Biactantial agreement in the endangered Gongduk and Mönpa languages of Bhutan” is based at Trinity’s School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences (SLSCS). The Lo-Rig project will use elicited and natural speech data of two of Bhutan’s unique languages, Gongduk and Mönpa, to come up with their exhaustive descriptive grammars. The project is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and has a counterpart organisation in Bhutan, the Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies (CBS). The PhD researcher will report to the Principal Investigator (PI) of the project and will be supported in the field by a Bhutanese Senior Researcher (SR) and a Research Assistant (RA). Other members of the project team include a Postdoctoral Researcher and a Research Assistant based in Trinity, and a second Research Assistant in Bhutan working with the PI on Gongduk.

Gongduk and Mönpa are two Sino-Tibetan languages of Bhutan with no known relatives within the language family. Despite their unique morphosyntactic feature of biactantial verbal agreement, both languages have been largely overlooked in the literature. Gongduk and Mönpa are also at a high risk of extinction. Therefore, it is of absolute necessity that we write their descriptive grammars, based on a natural speech corpus, before they disappear forever. Linguistic description offers science the opportunity to conduct ground-breaking typological and historical linguistic research. The exhaustive description of Gongduk and Mönpa will enable us to compare their verbal agreement systems to those of other Sino-Tibetan languages and infer the implications for the origin and development of verbal agreement and the language family as a whole. Linguistic description can also provide

indigenous communities with the basic set of materials to promote their linguistic heritage and counteract negative developments associated with a loss of language, culture and identity.

Technological advances present both a risk and an opportunity for safeguarding Bhutan's unique cultural and linguistic heritage, which is one of the cornerstones of the nation's national identity and development philosophy. The Lo-Rig project team, and in particular its postdoctoral researcher, will apply and develop innovative methods that speed up and simplify the transcription of recorded texts, using technologies such as Automatic Speech Recognition, and software applications for the subsequent analysis and dissemination of under-resourced, endangered languages. The team will also train Bhutanese linguists, contributing to a more sustainable future of Bhutan's languages, and produce outputs for language promotion.

The PhD researcher will focus on the Mönpa language, which is spoken by around 250 people in three distinct speech communities in Central Bhutan. The PhD student will select one of these three communities (Jangbi/Phumzur/Wangling, Riti, or Cungseng) as basis for the complete grammatical description, while also collecting data on the verbal agreement systems of the other two varieties for comparative and reconstructive purposes.

Applicant profile

Applicants are expected to have a strong interest in the topic and to be intrinsically motivated to work on the project. Major research activities will include:

- 1) Collect data – video- and audio recordings of natural speech and elicitation covering a wide range of speakers - on the Mönpa language of Bhutan in cooperation with the Senior researcher and Research Assistant in Bhutan;
- 2) Transcribe and translate these recordings, secondary data from other sources, and recordings collected by the Research Assistant in close cooperation and consultation with the Research Assistant and the speech community;
- 3) Analyse these data in close cooperation and consultation with the Research Assistant and the speech community, making use of sophisticated linguistic software such as PRAAT, ELAN and FLEEx;
- 4) Publish articles in peer-reviewed journals and a final PhD dissertation describing the grammar of the Mönpa language covering all topics such as phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, pragmatics, semantics, and discourse analysis;
- 5) Cooperate with the PI and the postdoc in applying and developing Automatic Speech Recognition models for Mönpa;
- 6) Assist in the development of materials for language revitalisation;
- 7) Assist the PI and other project team members in organising three workshops and an international conference hosted by the CBS in Bhutan.

In addition, the PhD researcher may be requested to contribute to any research activities and fulfil any other duties in connection to the Lo-Rig project as requested by the PI, and the tasks and responsibilities of the researcher may change as the project evolves.

The PhD researcher is expected to spend extended periods of typically three months a year in the villages in Bhutan where Mönpa is spoken to collect, analyse, and verify data with language consultants, starting in September to November 2026.

We are looking for enthusiastic PhD candidates who would like to acquire high-level training in descriptive linguistics and in writing a cutting-edge PhD dissertation at the TCD School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences.

Qualifications

- The role-holder will preferably have an MA, MSc or MPhil degree in (descriptive) linguistics or cognate fields.
- Applicants from other backgrounds will also be considered if fulfilling other criteria.

Knowledge

- Knowledge of all commonly used Office applications (e.g. Word, Excel) or equivalent is essential.
- Knowledge of audio- and video editing software (e.g. Audacity, Adobe Premiere Pro, Cyberlink), transcription and translation software (ELAN), linguistic analysis software (FLEX, PRAAT), programming language (Python), deep learning frameworks (PyTorch and TensorFlow) and website design and maintenance applications (e.g. WordPress, Dreamweaver) is highly desirable.

Experience

Experience in:

- dealing with large amounts of (linguistic) data, including video- and audio-recordings, and their metadata;
- preparing drafts of academic publications and copy-editing them;
- organising and managing academic events such as workshops and conferences

is highly desirable.

Skills

The candidate shall have:

- excellent analytical skills;
- an interdisciplinary approach;
- the ability to structure and pursue an independent research project;
- a strong motivation to publish in academic journals;
- excellent written and verbal communication skills in English are required;
- good organisational skills.

In addition:

- Proven ability to live and work in remote rural communities in diverse cultural contexts is preferable.
- Knowledge of one or more languages of Bhutan – in particular, spoken Dzongkha, Lhotshamkha (Nepali), and/or Mangdep or Khengkha and written Dzongkha or Tibetan is highly desirable.

Personal attributes

The PhD candidate shall have:

- excellent relational and interpersonal skills, including the ability to effectively engage with people of various cultural and educational backgrounds;
- the ability to work effectively in a team;
- display flexibility in working hours;
- have an understanding of and interest in the project and its goals and objectives.

The PhD Programme at TCD School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences

The candidate will join the PhD programme at the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences of Trinity College Dublin, Ireland's leading university which is located on a historic campus in the heart of Dublin. The School will provide all logistic, academic and intellectual support and integrate the successful candidate into a vibrant doctoral programme at TCD, while offering additional economic supports to cover fees and basic expenses related to the PhD programme. PhD students in Linguistics enjoy a wide range of training opportunities. For example, students participate in a research training programme in the department and have the opportunity to join masters level courses (including courses on research methods). Moreover, our PhD students are supported to attend high-quality international workshops and summer schools. PhD students are expected to collaborate closely with their supervisors and will produce a PhD based on a final PhD dissertation. PhD students may also be given the opportunity to acquire teaching experience by providing teaching support in our undergraduate programme.

Application Procedure

Informal enquiries are very welcome and can be made directly to **Dr Tim Bodt** (tim.bodt@tcd.ie), Associate Professor, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences.

To apply, candidates should submit:

1. A **motivation letter/expression of interest** (max. 1–2 pages) clearly outlining your motivation, research experience, and relevant skills in relation to the project;
2. A full **curriculum vitae**;
3. The names and contact details (including email addresses) of **two referees**;
4. At least one **example of written work** (in English) that demonstrates your analytical and writing skills in a social science discipline;
5. Official **transcripts of records** from all completed higher education degrees (e.g., Bachelor's and Master's);
6. Proof of **sufficient English proficiency**: IELTS 6.5 overall / 6.0 in each band or TOEFL iBT 90 overall / 21 in each section

via email to **Dr Tim Bodt** (tim.bodt@tcd.ie), Associate Professor, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences.

before the **closing date of September 30, 2025 (23:00 GMT)**.

Applications must indicate exactly *"PhD Application – Lo-Rig"* in the subject line.

Institutional background information

Trinity Centre for Asian Studies

The Trinity Centre for Asian Studies (TCAS) acts as a focal point for Asian Studies across Trinity College Dublin. The Centre aims to promote Asian Studies both nationally and internationally, and in so doing, to be the leading knowledge centre in Ireland for scholars, for policymakers, and for business leaders. The Centre teaches Chinese, Japanese and Korean as optional credit-bearing modules for all Trinity undergraduates and postgraduates within, respectively, the Trinity Electives and the PG Languages for Employability programme. We also provide language classes for the general public via our extramural evening courses. Our flagship postgraduate programme is the intensive one year M.Phil in Chinese Studies. The M.Phil. attracts students from Ireland and across the world. Our alumni have gone on to careers in business and industry, technology, government and diplomacy, the cultural and NGO sectors, whilst others have continued their studies at doctoral level, at Trinity and other leading universities. We provide doctoral supervision in a range of subject areas.

Further information on the Centre is available at: www.tcd.ie/Asian/

Centre for Language and Communication Studies

The Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CLCS), founded in 1979, is a centre of research, linguistics, applied linguistics, phonetics and speech science, computational linguistics and natural language processing. We also teach the Linguistic components of many undergraduate programmes and we have five taught postgraduate programmes. CLCS is one of two departments in the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, the other being the department of Clinical Speech and Language Studies.

In Linguistics, we focus our research on phonetics and phonology, and linguistic interfaces in syntax, semantic and pragmatics. In Applied Linguistics we focus our research on language pedagogy and acquisition, language teaching sign language teaching and interpreting bilingualism and multilingualism and new technologies in language learning. We have specific expertise in the applied linguistics of English, Irish, Irish Sign Language and Asian Languages. In Speech and Language Processing, we focus our research and development in speech processing, text-to-speech synthesis and automatic speech recognition, and in various areas of computational linguistics and natural language processing including morphological analysis/generation and syntactic/semantic parsing.

Further information on the Centre is available at: www.tcd.ie/slscs/centre-for-language-and-communication-studies/

School of Linguistic, Speech, and Communication Sciences

We are a team of scholars who all share a passion for human language in its various facets. We foster inclusive diversity as a powerful resource through the study of linguistics, communication, speech, and swallowing. Our work benefits individuals and communities through the lifespan. The School's vision is to be an internationally recognised reference point for the scientific study of language, communication, speech and swallowing, characterised by a distinctive focus on communication diversity and inclusion. We specifically aim to:

- Foster critical curiosity about the human capacity for language and symbolic communication and critical aspects of health and well-being related to language, communication and swallowing.

- Provide a nurturing learning environment where staff and students are facilitated to achieve excellence and extend their horizons
- Work collaboratively to realise the potential of research, teaching and learning synergies, and inspire our students and graduates to continue their quest for knowledge in partnership with us
- Inform social, educational and health policy on issues related to linguistic diversity and inclusion, multilingualism, the Irish language and Irish Sign Language, as well as communication and swallowing impairment

The School of Linguistic, Speech, and Communication Sciences research and teaching includes the following: Linguistics; Applied Linguistics; Computational Linguistics; Speech Science and Phonetics; Speech and Language Pathology; Dysphagia; Deaf Studies; Irish Sign Language; English Language Teaching; Irish Language Technology; and Asian Studies.

Further information on the School is available at: www.tcd.ie/slscs/

Trinity College Dublin

Founded in 1592, Trinity College is at the nexus of tradition and innovation, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across 24 schools and three faculties: arts, humanities, and social sciences; engineering, maths and science; and health sciences. Spread across 47 acres in Dublin's city centre, Trinity's more than 20,000 strong student body comes from all 32 counties of Ireland, and 16% of students come from outside the country. Of those, 40% are from outside the European Union, making Trinity's campus cosmopolitan and bustling, with a focus on diversity.

As Ireland's leading university, the pursuit of academic excellence through research and scholarship is at the heart of the Trinity education. Trinity is known for intellectual rigour, excellence, interdisciplinary approach, and research-led teaching. Home to Nobel prize winners such as scientist Ernest Walton and writer Samuel Beckett, Trinity draws visitors from across the world to its historic campus each year, including to the Book of Kells and Science Gallery which capture the university's connection to both old and new. Trinity accounts for one-fifth of all spin-out companies from Irish higher education institutions, helping to turn Ireland into an innovation-intensive, high-productivity economy. That culture of innovation and entrepreneurship is a defining characteristic of our campus as we help shape the next generation of job creators.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the employment policies, procedures and practices which do not discriminate on grounds such as gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or membership of the travelling community.