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Lawrence University Psychologist Awarded Fulbright Research Fellowship to Canada

Posted on: April 24th, 2013 by Rick Peterson

Lawrence University Professor of Psychology Terry Gottfried has been awarded a \$25,000 Fulbright Fellowship. Beginning in January 2014, Gottfried will spend five months as the Fulbright Visiting Research Chair in Brain, Language and Music at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.



Terry Gottfried

During his fellowship appointment, Gottfried will continue his ongoing research into the relation between music and speech processing. Working in collaboration with McGill researcher Linda Polka, Gottfried will examine the influence of linguistic and musical experience on listeners segmentation of the speech stream into words.

“We speak without clear pauses between words, so listeners must rely on other rhythmic information such as pitch and syllable duration to determine where one word ends and the next one begins,” explained Gottfried, who joined the Lawrence faculty in 1986. “This segmentation of the speech stream by rhythm and

pitch is done differently in different languages, so we're interested in investigating the role musical expertise has on learning how to process speech in a second language."

"We are delighted that Professor Gottfried has received this wonderful, prestigious award," said David Burrows, provost and dean of the faculty. "The work that he will do as part of the fellowship will be of great benefit to society. We are very proud to have one of our fine teacher-scholars honored by the Fulbright program. The award is a great testament to the high quality of Lawrence's faculty."

Role of Music in Language Perception

A specialist in second language acquisition, Gottfried has previously conducted research that found non-Mandarin-speaking musicians have an advantage over non-musicians in their perception of lexical tonal contrasts in Mandarin Chinese. Other studies suggest musicians acquire some of the speaking and perceiving skills necessary for second language learning more readily than non-musicians.

"My work with Dr. Polka will examine the extent to which musical training and ability may affect speech segmentation patterns," said Gottfried. "Montreal is an ideal place to conduct this research given the ready availability of French-English monolingual and bilingual listeners, with and without musical expertise."

He hopes to complete his study in time to present results at the fall 2014 meeting of the Acoustical Society of America.

"This Fulbright Fellowship is a wonderful opportunity to conduct research with a colleague I know as well as collaborate with other researchers interested in the brain mechanisms involved in music and language perception," said Gottfried. "This will be important

as I continue to teach courses in the psychology of music and language at Lawrence.”

This is the second time Gottfried has been recognized by the Fulbright Scholar Program. He was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in 2001 for a teaching and research position in the English department at Aarhus University in Denmark, where he taught a seminar on the psychology of language for English language students. He also conducted research comparing Danish and American English listeners’ perception of American English vowels.

Gottfried earned both a bachelor’s degree in French and psychology and a doctoral degree in experimental psychology at the University of Minnesota.

Established in 1946 and sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Fulbright Scholar Program is the federal government’s flagship program in international educational exchange. It provides grants in a variety of disciplines for teaching and research positions in more than 150 countries.