



NORTHWESTERN INSTITUTE
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NORTHWESTERN
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**Northwestern Institute on Complex Systems
invites you to its
Weekly Seminar**



Speaker: Jessica Maye, Assistant Professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders

Title: Learning to Hear a Language: Perceptual Reorganization for Speech Sounds in Infancy

When: Wednesday, November 29, 2006

Where: Chambers Hall, 600 Foster Street, Lower Classroom Level

Time: 12:00 – 1:00

NICO Coffee Hour will follow for questions, networking, and collaboration

Abstract

Different languages utilize different sets of speech sounds and speech sound contrasts; for example, English distinguishes the sounds /l/ and /r/, as in the words 'rice' vs. 'lice', but Japanese does not. In this talk I will discuss how properties of the native language sound system affect listeners' perception of speech, such that speakers of different languages actually hear speech differently (an effect that may be thought of as foreign accented perception). Native language effects on perception begin during an infant's first year of life, before the acquisition of meaningful words. I will present evidence that infants' perception of speech sounds is shaped by statistical regularities in the speech that they hear during the first few months of life.