



UBC Infant
Studies Centre

BABY TALK

Fall 2013
Newsletter

NEW STUDIES TO BEGIN THIS FALL

Detecting Patterns in Spoken Language

How does a baby begin to understand an overwhelming world of brand new sights, sounds, and feelings? For one, babies have amazing abilities to detect patterns in their surroundings. But how do they manage to do this? In a new study this Fall, we try to answer this question by exploring the limits of your baby's ability to detect patterns in speech. We're interested in whether your baby recognizes all the sounds in these patterns equally, or whether some sounds are easier to learn and remember than others.

Hearing, Seeing, and Feeling to Perceive Language

As babies get older, they use each of their five senses to explore the world around them. Often, these senses work together to help a baby understand a complex experience like hearing language. Not only do babies hear people speaking, but they also see people's lips and tongues moving while making words. Perhaps just as importantly, they can feel their own lips and tongues moving in similar ways as they begin to babble and produce their first words. We want to know how these three senses work together to help babies learn to perceive speech, especially when hearing sounds they've never heard before.

ANOTHER EXCITING NEW FINDING!

The Newborn Brain is Prepared to Learn Language

We have been interested in whether newborns enter the world with their brains specially tuned to learn language. We found that newborn infants – only a few days old – show brain activation in "language regions" when listening to both a familiar language (English) and an unfamiliar language (Spanish), but in comparison, very little activation to a language-like whistled communication system (a "surrogate language" of Spanish used in the Canary Islands called *Silbo Gomero*). These results suggest to us that already in their first days of life, babies process language as a special signal.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PARTICIPATE?

Please contact us at (604) 822-6408
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If you have *any* concerns about your infant's development, please don't hesitate to talk to your pediatrician. And if you feel your infant might benefit from the attention of a specialist, the following resources can help you to find someone appropriate:

- **Vancouver Coastal Health Speech & Language Services** (for language concerns): 604-659-1107; http://www.vch.ca/your_health/health_topics/speech-and-language/speech-and-language/
- **BC Centre for Ability** (for concerns in more than one area of development): 604-451-5511; <http://www.centreforability.bc.ca/>

You can also find a list of private services available on the BC Association of Speech/Language Pathologists and Audiologists' website: www.bcaslpa.ca