Advanced Topics in Language and Speech Development

Term 2

Module Lead: Dr Rana Abu-Zhaya (rana.abuzhaya@ucl.ac.uk)

Module Description

This module will examine the language input directed to infants and produced around them, and the mechanisms infants utilize to learn from this input. A special focus will be placed on unpacking the multimodal features of language input (i.e., how the speech signal is coupled with other cues) and infants' early speech perception and word learning skills (in the first two years of life). These themes will be presented with an emphasis on individual differences and cultural and linguistic diversity by exposing students to research findings from different societal, cultural, and linguistic contexts (e.g., how do caregivers in different cultures communicate with infants?) and emphasizing how insights from diverse contexts challenge common perceptions about early language development.

Through this module, students will learn about the experimental methods that are used to study early language development, the theoretical models that are prevalent in the field, and the most recent advances and big questions in the study of early language development. The theoretical content will be covered in the lectures, and will be accompanied by tutorials and seminars. These tutorials will provide students with a practical experience analysing real language development data using multiple sources and platforms.

Students *must* have some basic knowledge of early language development, for example through modules like PLIN0008 "Introduction to Children's Language Development" which is typically taught in term 1.

Assessments:

Individual Project: 60% (3000 words)

Exam: 40% (500 words - Mini essay take home exam)