



PHOTO AND CHART: University of Washington Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences

Distinguishing Sounds

During the first year of life, a baby starts to specialize in the sounds of his native language and becomes less able to distinguish sounds common only to other languages. University of Washington researchers exposed 9-month-old American babies of native-English-speaking parents to sounds associated with Mandarin either through sessions with a native-Mandarin-speaking tutor or video or audio lessons. At 12 months, babies who had worked with a person recognized Mandarin sounds more accurately than did infants who were exposed to the language through video or audio only.