

# Cracking the Speech Code

November 08, 2013



How exactly do we learn to speak? Patricia Kuhl has spent her career developing answers to that question. Kuhl is internationally recognized for her research on early language and brain development, and for her studies that show how young children learn. She is co-director, with her husband Andrew Meltzoff, of the University of Washington's Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences. Kuhl's lab investigates how infant and adult brains process speech. She has also conducted research on language development in autism. Kuhl is widely known for her theories that account for the developmental change by which infants' ability to discriminate speech sounds becomes increasingly specific to their native language as they age. This model shows that babies use their computational abilities to "crack" the speech code and that their social skills play an important role in learning. Her research has played a major role in identifying critical periods in development. Kuhl is a recipient of a 25th anniversary [APS William James Fellow Award](#) for her significant intellectual contributions to the basic science of psychology. Read more about Kuhl's research [here](#).