Harvard Linguistics Colloquium Talk Series

Speaker: Megha Sundara (UCLA)
Title: When and how do infants discover morphological suffixes?
Time: Friday, March 14th, 12-1:30pm
Location: Emerson 305

Abstract:
Suffixes like *-s*, *-ed* and *-ing* are the basic building blocks of English syntax. First, I will show that English-learning infants discover *-s*, then *-ing,* then *-ed*, in the first year of life, without access to meaning, function or word class. Next, I will use computational modeling to evaluate various mechanisms for affix discovery against the developmental trajectory uncovered in the infant experiments. Then, I will present infant experiments confirming two novel predictions of the successful model regarding when infants discover (a) specific allomorphs and (b) another suffix, *-ie*/*-y*. I will end by offering predictions for the trajectory of morphological acquisition in Spanish, French and German.