



## **Early word learning through communicative inference**

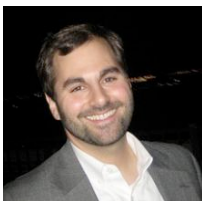
**Professor Michael Frank**  
**MIT/Stanford University**

How do children learn their first words? While they are able to make use of distributional information about the co-occurrence of words and objects, even very young children also seem to take into account information about speakers' communicative intentions. Rather than being thought of as purely statistical or purely social, I argue that children's early word learning is best modelled as a process of statistical inference about speakers' communicative intentions. Using a communicative inference framework allows our model to learn words accurately from natural corpus data, to explain a large range of developmental results, and to make novel developmental predictions. In addition, this framework offers insight into how the rich variety of non-linguistic information about speaker's intentions can be used in service of word learning.

### **Seminar sponsored by CLaS & MACCS**

**Venue:** Building X5B Room 012

**Date & Time:** 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2009 3 to 5:30pm



## **Professor Michael C. Frank**

Michael Frank is a graduate student at MIT finishing his dissertation in Brain and Cognitive Sciences and starting as Assistant Professor of Psychology at Stanford University in Fall of 2010. He is broadly interested in the relationship between language and cognition, both in the ways that children's understanding of other people and the physical world plays a role in the acquisition of language and in the ways that learning words can change the ways people think about the world. Current projects include modeling and empirical work on early language acquisition as well as a line of research on cross-linguistic studies of numerical cognition (motivating the current visit to Australia and Indonesia).