Understanding spoken language involves matching the acoustic input onto linguistic representations, a process complicated by considerable differences between speakers and contexts. How do listeners accommodate this variation?

In this talk, I will present several lines of research addressing this question. I will discuss my work examining first and second language listeners’ ability to adapt to accented speech and the phonetic adjustment mechanisms that may underlie these processes. Additionally, I will present work on the influence of indexical and noise variation on speech processing and its implications for the nature of our stored representations.

Together, this research sheds light on how linguistic and non-linguistic information shape listeners’ ability to accommodate and adapt to diversity in the real world.