

Seminar Series for Joint East-West Early Language Project

アジア欧米言語獲得研究プロジェクト セミナーシリーズ

Seminar Series #3

*Sampling Biases in Language
Development Research:
Contributions from Asian Languages*



Reiko Mazuka

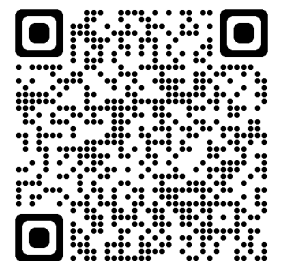
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JEWEL Project Principal Investigator

Host: Sho Tsuji

International Research Center for Neurointelligence
The University of Tokyo

Registration site ↓



12 Nov. 2021

16:00-17:30 (JST)

Zoom Webinar

Admission: Free

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“Compensatory contribution of linguistic and social factors for early language
acquisition: Cross linguistic study between European and Asian languages”

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JEWEL seminar series #3

Sampling biases in language development research:
Contributions from Asian Languages

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Languages in the world are diverse, yet the vast majority of language development research has been done with English and some other European languages. The resulting bias makes it difficult to determine whether relevant features are specific to those languages or apply broadly across typologically different languages.

The talk will present results from studies with Japanese infants and infants learning other Asian languages (including cross-linguistic comparison) that challenge or complement previous findings, especially with regard to the acquisition of segmental contrasts, the emergence of phonological grammar, and the role of infant-directed speech. For example, it is known that in English, Dutch, and other European languages the coronal stop /t/ occurs more frequently than labial /p/ or dorsal /k/. This has led to a hypothesis that coronal articulation is universally *unmarked* and easier to both produce and hear than dorsal or labial articulations. For such a hypothesis to hold up, however, it would need to hold true for languages in which /t/ occurs *less* frequently than /p/ or /k/, otherwise it may simply be an effect of frequency. Japanese, it turns out, provides a way to support the hypothesis and rule out frequency, as Dutch and Japanese babies show similar asymmetrical discrimination patterns between /t/ and /p/, despite the relatively low frequency of /t/ in Japanese.

The talk will discuss results from these and related studies, highlighting the importance of studying diverse languages to disentangle fundamental questions pertaining to acquisition.