



# 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 #4

*Representation and Diversity in  
Infant Language Acquisition:  
The case of lexical tone*



# Leher Singh

National University of Singapore

Host: Reiko Mazuka

RIKEN CBS

JEWEL Project Principal Investigator

**10 Dec. 2021**

**10:00-11:30 (JST)**

**Zoom Webinar**

Admission: Free

Registration site ↓



This work was supported by MEXT Grant-in-Aid for Specially Promoted Research  
“Compensatory contribution of linguistic and social factors for early language  
acquisition: Cross linguistic study between European and Asian languages”

(Grant number JP20H05617)

## Representation and Diversity in Infant Language Acquisition: The case of lexical tone

Leher Singh (National University of Singapore)

As with most areas of psychological research, much of our basic knowledge of early language acquisition is heavily informed by Indo-European languages. At the same time, this knowledge has been generalized to infants at large. Recent research suggests that some processes associated with infancy, that are thought to be fundamental to later word learning, may differ in learners of less well-represented languages. I will present research on infants' abilities to discriminate native and non-native sounds, to learn words, and to process sentences in Mandarin Chinese. In each of these domains, infants and young children demonstrate markedly different sensitivities to those reported in learners of English. Differences are evident in how infants perceive and processes specific aspects of Mandarin, such as lexical tone. However, they are also evident in how infants perceive and process vowels and consonants common to all languages. Implications for generalizable theories of language acquisition are discussed.