

**A longitudinal study of infants' understanding of intentional actions and later theory of
mind abilities in Hong Kong**

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Abstract

A number of studies have shown that infant's language and their ability to interpret the intention behind human actions predicts later theory of mind (TOM) abilities. However, majority of the studies were carried out in western culture, we conducted a longitudinal study on 157 Hong Kong infants at the age of 16-month and retested 74 infants 8 months later when they were 2-year-old to study 1) whether the infants in Hong Kong are able to interpret intention behind human actions at 16-months; 2) whether their language and ability of intentional actions understanding at 16-month predict TOM abilities at 2-year. At 16-month-old, we tested intentional actions understanding through the experiment of Luo & Baillargeon, (2007) and measured the infants' language ability through a Cantonese version of MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory (CCDI) filled by their parents. TOM abilities at 2-year-old were assessed through novel object labeling tasks adopted by Baldwin (1993). The infants' understanding of intentional actions at the age of 16-month and its correlation with TOM abilities at the age of 2-year were statistically insignificant but a correlation between language at 16-months and TOM at 2-years was observed. This suggests Hong Kong infants may have a late development of intentional actions understanding but the linkage between early language abilities and later TOM abilities is in common with infants in western cultures.