

## Comprehension of Ditransitive Constructions in Mandarin-speaking Children with Developmental Language Disorder

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It has long been reported that children with developmental language disorder (DLD) encounter challenges in producing ditransitive constructions, but few studies have investigated the comprehension of the constructions in the population. This study examined the comprehension of ditransitive constructions in Mandarin-speaking children with DLD as compared to the age-matched typically developing (TD) children. Eighteen children with DLD (mean age=62.32 months), and 27 TD children (mean age=61.97 months) participated in a sentence-picture matching task on four patterns of Mandarin ditransitive constructions, i.e., S1 (Subj.+Vgei+IO+DO), S2 (Subj.+V+DO+gei+IO), S3 (Subj.+gei+IO+V+DO), and S4 (Subj.+V+IO+DO). The results showed that (a) TD children performed at ceiling level on all patterns; (b) Despite a general lower-than-TD performance in the comprehension task, only the comprehension of S1 and S3 was affected in children with DLD, whereas that of S2 and S4 was preserved; (c) A predominant number of errors of semantic role reversal between the Agent and Recipient were committed by children with DLD across structures. The findings suggest that children with DLD have difficulties in representing the hierarchical relationship between arguments and the ditransitive verb, especially in the more complex varieties, which impairs the assignment of semantic roles in sentence interpretation. Hence, providing a clear illustration of the relationship between each argument and the verb in the sentence, as well as the mapping between arguments and semantic roles, would enhance children's comprehension of the constructions.

**Keywords:** ditransitive constructions, developmental language disorder, Mandarin Chinese, comprehension, semantic role assignment