

Real time comprehension of Spanish articles in children with developmental language disorder: Empirical evidence from eye movements

Por: [Christou, S](#) (Christou, Spyros)^[1]; [Guerra, E](#) (Guerra, Ernesto)^[2]; [Coloma, CJ](#) (Julia Coloma, Carmen)^[2,3]; [Barrachina, LA](#) (Andreu Barrachina, Llorenc)^[4]; [Araya, C](#) (Araya, Claudia)^[3,5]; [Rodriguez-Ferreiro, J](#) (Rodriguez-Ferreiro, Javier)^[1]; [Pereda, MJB](#) (Buj Pereda, Maria Jose)^[1]; [Sanz-Torrent, M](#) (Sanz-Torrent, Monica)^[1]

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Abstract

Function words and, more specifically, articles have been widely indicated as one of the main sources of difficulty for children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). The present study is the first to assess the online comprehension of Spanish articles in bilingual children with DLD. In an eye tracking experiment, we monitored participants' eye movements as they listened to Spanish articles embedded in structurally simple sentences. Ninety-six subjects from four different groups were evaluated: 24 children with DLD (average age 7;08), 24 children with the same chronological age (average age 7;08), 24 younger children matched for mean length utterance (average age 6;08), and 24 adults (average age 22;05). We calculated the proportion between the preference for the correct visual referent and a competitor object. Our results suggest that children with DLD are capable of timely comprehension of Spanish articles in real time and within simple sentence structures. However, we observed a strong effect of chronological age in the sample of interest; younger children with DLD are able to identify the correct referent, but this preference is weaker compared to the older children with DLD. We also observed local differences between the DLD group, and the other two children control groups, particularly when the chronological age group is introduced as a factor. These findings suggest a developmental trajectory that is different in the DLD group relative to children with typical language development. Notwithstanding, in spite of the article production difficulties previously reported, children with DLD in the present sample appear to be able to comprehend Spanish articles in the current experimental conditions.

Palabras clave

Palabras clave de autor: [Developmental language disorder \(DLD\)](#); [Language comprehension](#); [Articles](#); [Eye movements](#)

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Información del autor

Dirección para petición de copias:

University of Barcelona Univ Barcelona, Fac Psychol, Barcelona, Spain.

Dirección correspondiente: Christou, S (autor correspondiente)

+ Univ Barcelona, Fac Psychol, Barcelona, Spain.

Direcciones:

- + [1] Univ Barcelona, Fac Psychol, Barcelona, Spain
- + [2] Univ Chile, Ctr Adv Res Educ, Inst Educ, Santiago, Chile
- + [3] Univ Chile, Fac Med, Santiago, Chile
- + [4] Univ Oberta Catalunya, Estudis Psicol & Ciencies Educ, Barcelona, Spain
- + [5] Univ Acad Humanismo Cristiano, Fac Pedag, Santiago, Chile

Direcciones de correo electrónico: s.christou@ub.edu

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