

## *First Language Acquisition of Elliptical Structures in Cantonese*

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This study investigates the sensitivity to two Cantonese elliptical structures among Cantonese-speaking children aged between 3;11 and 6;9. Previous studies (e.g. Thornton and Wexler 1999, Matsuo and Duffield 2001, Foley et al. 2003) found that English-speaking children (4-6-year-olds) are sensitive to different properties of VP Ellipsis (VPE). Chinese has VPE and Null Object Construction (NOC) (Huang 1991, Li 2002, Xu 2003). Despite their superficial resemblance, the two constructions differ crucially in the adverbial recovery in the antecedent clause. The adverbial is recovered in VPE, but not in NOC. In the experiments, the subject matched the stimulus sentences against act-out scenarios. The results show that they are sensitive to the different property of adverbial recovery of these constructions and the constructions themselves. The judgment is particularly robust in their interpretation of VPE. The study suggests that the acquisition of VPE and NOC in Cantonese before four.