Acquisition of belief reports by Mandarin speaking children

Preschoolers tend to fall prey to false belief errors and reject *think-*sentences like (1) when the complement clause is false. However, Lewis et al (2017) show that making beliefs salient by introducing two characters (e.g., Donald vs. Minnie) with conflicting beliefs improves three-year olds' performance significantly. Here we show that the same manipulation does not help Mandarin-speaking children with *juede* “think”.

(1) Donald thinks that Mickey is behind the chair.

**Exp 1** is a Truth Value Judgment Task (TVJT) where children listen to stories of a seeker looking for a hider with a puppet, and are asked to judge the puppet’s utterance like (1). We manipulate the truth of the whole sentence (matrix truth) and the truth of the complement clause. Results with a GLMM analysis of 35 children (3;2-4;2, mean 3;8) and 35 adults (Fig 1) reveal a main effect of complement truth (B= 2.88, *p*<0.001): children and half of the adults reject (1) when the complement is false, the other half of the adults evaluate (1) according to the main clause.

**Exp 2** uses the same material except that we introduce another seeker Minnie to emphasize the relevance of belief. Results from 32 children (3;2-4;2, mean 3;8) and 32 adults (Fig 2) with a GLMM reveal a main effect of matrix truth for adults (B= 4.45, *p*<0.001) but a main effect of complement truth for children (B= 1.9, *p*<0.001): all of the adults use main clause truth/falsity to evaluate (1) but children still use complement truth.

We can thus **conclude** that even when beliefs are made salient in context, Mandarin-speaking children still make false belief errors. This difference between Mandarin and English children might be due to the fact *juede* is rarely used in the input, so children might ignore the whole matrix clause.

**(296 words)**



Figure 1. percentage of “yes”-response in Exp 1 with one seeker and one hider

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Figure 2. percentage of “yes”-response in Exp 2 with two seekers and one hider